

Steve Mayer



Bishop v Knight:

the verdict

Which is the stronger minor piece?

Bishop versus Knight: The Verdict

Steve Mayer

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To my mother, Gloria Mayer

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Symbols

+	Check
++	Double check
#	Checkmate
x	Capture
!!	Brilliant move
!	Good move
!?	Interesting move
?!	Dubious move
?	Bad move
??	Blunder
+−	White is winning
±	White is much better
±	White is slightly better
=	Equal position
∓	Black is slightly better
∓	Black is much better
−+	Black is winning
Ch	Championship
(<i>n</i>)	<i>n</i> th match game
(<i>D</i>)	Diagram follows
1-0	White wins
1/2-1/2	Drawn game
0-1	Black wins

Preface

I'll let you in on a little secret: the most common material imbalance in chess is that of bishop versus knight. Intellectually, most chess-players realize this, but it is easy to forget in the face of the conventional 'value scale' of the pieces. After all, for most of us, the litany of 'one, three, three, five, nine, the game' was the first bit of strategy we were taught, generally within fifteen minutes of learning the distinction between checkmate and stalemate.

In fact, bishops and knights are different pieces. They move differently from each other and it is highly unlikely that they share the same value. This was recognized as least as far back as the mid-nineteenth century and a great deal of energy was expended trying to fine-tune the value that should be accorded the minor pieces.

However, there's a big problem: the performance difference between the bishop and knight can be very marked depending on various aspects of the position, particularly those connected with pawn structure. I once worked on a computer program which accorded the bishop a value of 3.4 points and the knight

a value of 3. The program played quite well, but even the programmer realized that there isn't 'really' a difference of 0.4 points between the minor pieces. Telling the program to accord them different values was simply the most expedient method of factoring in the effects of differences in the respective pawn structures.

As a chess teacher who has worked with perhaps a thousand chessplayers over the years, I am accustomed to the plaintive 'Which is *really* better?' that starts as soon as a novice chess player has learned enough to ask tough questions. My answer, which always strikes the questioner as evasive, is 'It depends on the position.' Curiously, despite the importance of this subject, it appears to have received very little detailed coverage in chess literature. Having written this book, I understand this paucity: it's a huge subject domain and any single volume on the subject must be considered a preliminary to a lifetime of individual work. Indeed, a different writer might have selected wholly different examples and chosen different themes to emphasize.

6 Preface

It will probably be helpful to the reader if he/she understands the intent of this book. It's meant primarily as a middlegame primer on the topic of bishop versus knight. The ending is touched upon specifically (and lightly) in three chapters, but not in the context of single-piece minor-piece endings. This topic has been covered quite well for some time by a number of great writers and players, including Averbakh, Fine, et al. I strongly urge you to study bishop vs knight endings to gain a better understanding of the minor pieces.

I also tried to avoid having this turn into an openings primer. The exchange of bishop for knight occurs in a variety of openings, e.g., the Nimzo-Indian, the Trompowsky Attack, the French, several Open (and Closed) Sicilian variations, et al. It's common sense that any opening which has been played at the highest levels as long as the Nimzo-Indian must be fundamentally sound, so the resulting middlegame positions must also be fundamentally sound. Consequently, I have made some effort to avoid overloading what is intended to be a book on the middlegame with specific openings that can be studied with the aid of specialized opening works.

I have adopted a more analysis-intensive approach than most books of this type. The reason for this is

two-fold. First, chess really does come down to concrete variations, so it seems to me that it would be a bit dishonest to present games as 'model' play and then not bother to point out where things went wrong (or could have been improved). Secondly, the analysis frequently sheds light on the thematic ideas that are illustrated in particular chapters, thus serving to strengthen the reader's conceptual understanding of the material. I've also tried to avoid the inflationary 'page filling' of such obvious comments as 'The knight plays to e5 because it is then well-placed in the centre.'

The writer must assume a certain amount of knowledge on the part of the reader. It's possible that some readers will feel a bit lost at times, perhaps because I've assumed something they don't know, but I trust that anyone reading this work understands that centralized knights are normally well-placed, doubled pawns are frequently weak, it's usually best to have pawns in front of your castled king position, etc.

The reader should remember that a single game may illustrate several different ideas. In at least a few cases, I feel that the choice of which chapter to place a particular game was arbitrary, i.e., the same game could have been featured in three or four different chapters.

I didn't think that it was necessary to include chapters on 'obvious'

cases of minor-piece superiority (or inferiority), so there are no chapters devoted to bishops in wide-open positions or that sort of thing. It is my hope that the space gained has allowed for discussion of ideas that might be a bit less shop-worn, such as over-rated pieces, problem pieces, knight speed, 'changing the colour' of a bishop, etc.

Oh, I nearly forgot to answer which minor piece is *really* better. One of my favourite quips comes from GM Tony Miles, who once

made a remark along the lines of 'the bishops are an advantage you can win with'. While everything depends on the position, I think it's true that the bishops are better than the knights in a wider variety of positions than the knights are better than the bishops. Of course, I'm not sure this does us much good, as we only get to play one position at a time.

Steve Mayer
Virginia, 1997

Acknowledgements

No book is written in a vacuum, so this book can hardly be an exception. A number of people offered advice, encouragement and aid along the way, so I'd like to thank them. Of course, any errors or misconceptions are strictly the author's.

A number of friends, both chess players and non-chess players, offered advice and encouragement. These include Brian Deatly, George French, Roger Mahach, Bill Mason, Bill Robinson, Sal Rosario, John Stannard, Anna Tecson, Richard Terry and Jessica Wilder. My apologies to anyone I've forgotten.

John Fedorowicz was kind enough to offer some comments and insights into the exciting game Miles-de Firmian, Manila Interzonal 1990.

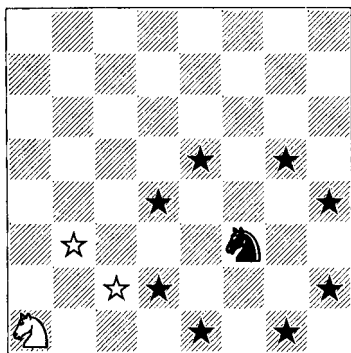
My boss and friend, David Mehler, was always encouraging and my job with the U.S. Chess Center makes it much easier to justify writing chess books.

I owe a lot to Graham Burgess. His analytical diligence and editorial skills have made this book better than it was in its original form.

Finally, I'd like to thank and dedicate this book to my mother, Gloria Mayer.

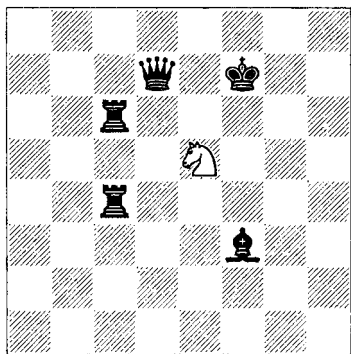
1 Some Characteristics of Knights and Bishops

It's useful to consider some characteristics of the minor pieces. Let's start with the knight on an open board.



The knight at a1 has only two possible moves, while the knight at f3 has eight moves. This gives us the range of two squares to eight squares for a knight's choices. It's also possible for the choices to change quickly, e.g., the knight at a2 will triple its choices to six squares the moment it moves, while the knight at f3 could move to h2, in which case its options would drop to three squares. These dramatic increases and decreases in mobility suggest that knight moves should be considered carefully.

The knight is a short-range piece, i.e., unlike the rook, bishop or queen, it can't swoop from one end of the board to the other in a single move.



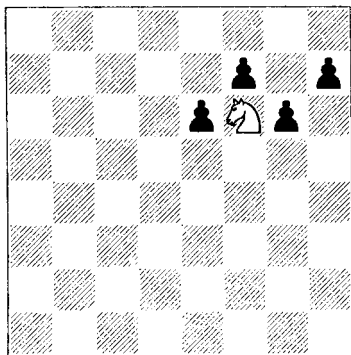
The knight's method of moving is not related to that of any piece other than knights. This means that it can attack as many as five important pieces without being subjected to counterattack.

The knight can reach squares of both colours and has the potential to reach all 64 squares.

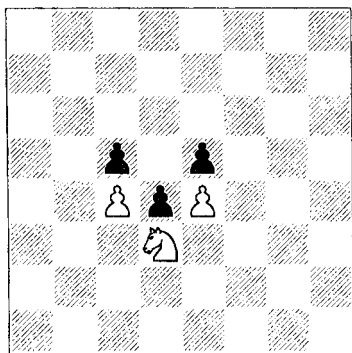
The knight changes the colour of the square it sits upon every time it moves. Further, it attacks squares of an opposite colour to that upon which it sits. David Bronstein makes

10 Some Characteristics of Knights and Bishops

the point that a knight occupying a hole in a position with a weakened colour complex actually attacks allegedly healthy pawns situated on the opposing colour complex.



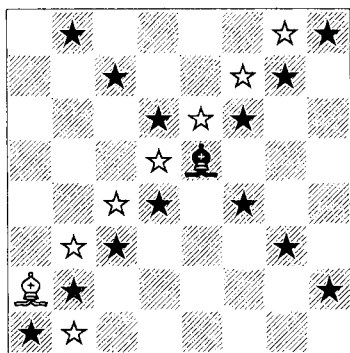
As every beginner knows, the knight is able to jump over other pieces. This allows it to perform defensive duties without suffering a drop in offensive power. The knight makes an excellent blocker.



The knight does well in closed or semi-closed positions. A knight move to the edge of the board or

toward the edge of the board should always be considered carefully, as the knight's decrease in mobility may make it a target for trapping operations by the opponent.

It's harder to speak of general characteristics of the bishop, as so much depends on pawn structure. Of course, its biggest limitation is that it can only reach half the squares on the board. However, it has the advantage of being a long-range piece.

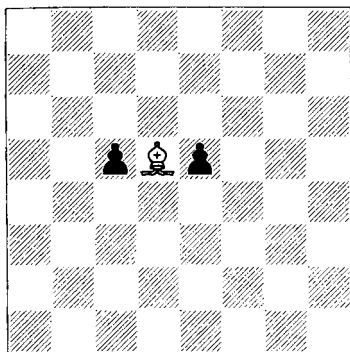


If there is some reason that the bishop wishes to control g8, it does it as well from the distant a2 as it would from the adjacent f7.

We also note that bishops have their greatest mobility in the centre and their least mobility on the side of the board. Therefore, the bishop at e5 has thirteen choices, while the bishop at a2 has only seven choices.

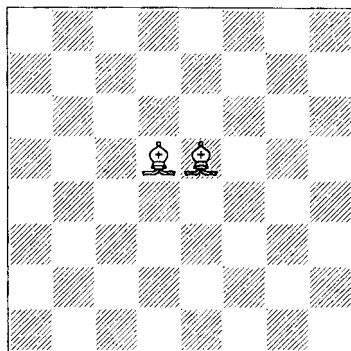
Bishops are less dynamic than knights in that they can move and

still continue to protect or attack some of the same squares they hit before they moved. By comparison, the knight loses all touch with its previous set of squares the moment it moves.



Bishops have the further advantage that their mobility allows them to provide a variety of functions. Here we see a bishop preventing the advance of passed pawns along two diagonals. If we were to add more pieces to the board, we might

even see it attack along two diagonals.



The bishop pair make up for many of the deficiencies of the single bishop. Here the centralized bishops hit 26 squares, while even a centralized queen hits only 27 squares. When there is a contest between two bishops and a bishop and knight, one of the most typical methods of countering the bishop pair is to exchange the like-coloured bishops against each other.

2 Two Bishops and the Steinitzian Restriction Method

Steinitz is commonly credited with the discovery that two bishops versus a bishop and knight or two knights is often an advantage. Whether the first world champion truly 'discovered' this can be debated, as earlier masters already recognized that two bishops can form a potent attacking force. However, it cannot be disputed that Steinitz's play did much to codify the technical exploitation of the two bishops in open and semi-open positions, nor can it be denied that his voluminous writings did much to spread the glad tidings to such younger masters as Charousek, Lasker, Pillsbury and Tarrasch. The very term 'the advantage of the two bishops' (or the simpler 'the two bishops') quickly passed into the *lingua franca* of chessplayers.

Richard Réti is among the authors who credit Steinitz with working out the method of how to use the two bishops to advantage in an open or semi-open position. In the classic *Masters of the Chess*

Board, Réti points to the following game as probably the earliest demonstration of Steinitz's discoveries.

Rosenthal – Steinitz Vienna 1873

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 g6!? 4 d4 exd4 5 ♗xd4

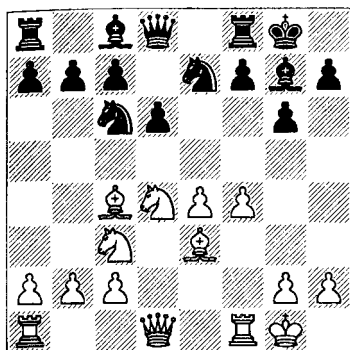
The sharper 5 ♗d5!? was introduced in Rosenthal-Steinitz, London 1883 (see page 21 below).

5 ...	♙g7
6 ♙e3	♗ge7
7 ♙c4	d6

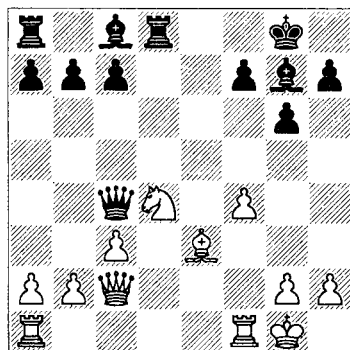
Neishtadt points out that 7...0-0 8 ♖d2 ♗e5 9 ♙e2 d5! would lead to positions similar to the game but with Black having saved a tempo by advancing the d-pawn in one move (cited by Euwe in his book *From Steinitz to Fischer*).

8 0-0	0-0
9 f4?! (D)	

A modern master would shy away from this move, as it accomplishes nothing aside from the permanent weakening of the e3- and e4-squares. It does give the illusion



B



W

of increasing White's space advantage but Steinitz is able to demonstrate through concrete play that the white centre can be destroyed.

- 9 ... ♖a5!
 10 ♔d3 d5!
 11 exd5 ♘xd5
 12 ♘xd5 ♙xd5

There can be no doubt that Black is better, as he has exposed the weaknesses on the e-file. Note, too, the fact that the pawn at f4 helps ensure that the white queen's bishop is bad.

- 13 c3 ♖d8
 14 ♙c2 ♘c4
 15 ♔xc4 ♙xc4 (D)

Steinitz has solved the problem of the offside queen's knight and acquired the two bishops. Réti has a great deal to say about this position:

In contrast to the far-reaching bishop, which can become effective from a distance, the knight, in order to become effective, has to

operate in close proximity to the opposing forces. In order to become lastingly effective, it must find protected squares near the enemy's camp, mostly squares protected by pawns, inasmuch as other pieces are in the long run not suitable for the protection of the knight. It follows therefore that in completely open positions without pawns, the bishop is superior to the knight, a fact that is confirmed by the results of the endgame theory. Conversely, the knight is superior to the bishop in closed positions, on the one hand because the pawns are in the bishop's way, and on the other hand because the pawns form points of support for the knight, as remarked above.

The method created by Steinitz to turn the advantage of the two bishops to the fullest possible account, is applicable only to positions such as [Rosenthal-Steinitz, Vienna 1873] which are neither

14 Two Bishops and the Steinitzian Restriction Method

closed nor completely open, but in which there are still points of support for the Knight, protected by the pawns, as here for example d4 and e5. The method then consists in advancing the black pawns in such a way that these points of support become unsafe for the knight which thereby is condemned to a passive role and becomes quite ineffectual.

The continuation of the present game, along with this chapter's other examples, will bear out the accuracy of Réti's general description of what might be termed the Steinitzian Restriction Method. It is worth noting that the keeper of the bishops must be prepared to move pawns to restrict the opposing knight or knights. This requires delicate timing so as to avoid creating exploitable weaknesses in the camp of the bishops. Further, many of these pawn moves will have at least the temporary effect of restricting the bishops, so care must be taken that it will be possible to unveil the bishops at a later time.

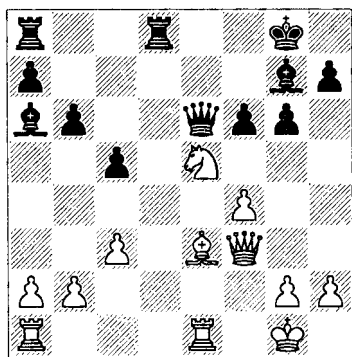
16 ♖f2 c5!

Steinitz steals the d4-square from White's knight. An additional benefit of the text move is that it prevents the white bishop from opposing the black king's bishop from the central d4-square. Indeed, the most effective remedy against the two bishops in such positions is the exchange of one of the them for

the opposing bishop, because the remaining bishop may then encounter difficulties due to its inability to cover half the squares on the board.

17 ♘f3 b6
18 ♘e5 ♖e6
19 ♖f3 ♙a6
20 ♚fe1 f6! (D)

Black keeps a slight edge after 20...♙xe5?! 21 ♙f2!, but then he has created opposite-coloured bishops and sold the bishop pair too cheaply.



W

I noted above that the player with the two bishops must be prepared to make 'weakening' pawn moves and to block his bishops when applying the Steinitzian Restriction Method. The text, which steals the e5-square from the white knight, is an example of this.

21 ♘g4 h5!

This additional pawn move is an even better illustration of the need

to move pawns when applying the Steinitzian Restriction Method. It seems odd to move the h-pawn, because Black does not have any near-term opportunity for a king-side attack, nor is the knight at g4 generating any concrete threats. However, Steinitz recognized that on g4, the knight would still present Rosenthal with tactical opportunities against the weakened f6 and h6-squares.

22 ♖f2 ♖f7

23 f5

In *From Steinitz to Fischer*, Euwe wrongly gives this a question mark.

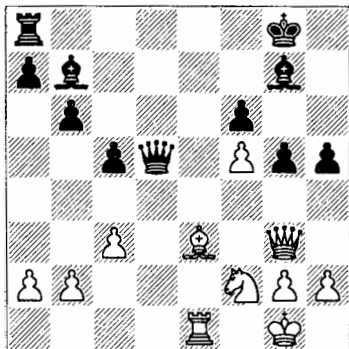
23 ... g5

It may appear that Black's strategy has ended in disaster, because his once proud king's bishop is now buried behind its own pawns. However, the f5-pawn cannot be defended easily with the g-pawn, so Steinitz has good chances of winning it. Further, even if White somehow manages to keep the f5-pawn in place, it should still be possible later to redeploy the bishop onto the open b8-h2 diagonal, e.g., ...♗g7-f8-d6.

24 ♖ad1

White's queen will now be forced from its active post on the long diagonal, but the attempt to create counterplay with 24 ♖c6?! ♗b7 25 ♖e6 ♖xe6 26 fxe6 loses the e-pawn after the further 26...♗d6! 27 e7 ♗e8, when the pawn will be surrounded and captured – Mayer.

24 ... ♗b7
25 ♖g3 ♗d5!
26 ♖xd5! ♖xd5 (D)



W

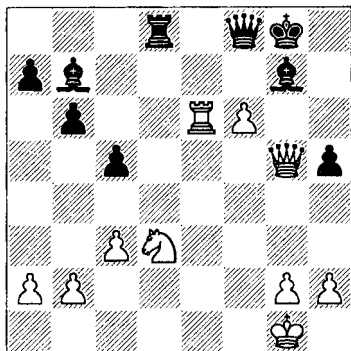
27 ♖d1??

This goes down without a fight. Rosenthal had an excellent opportunity to obscure his positional disadvantage by playing 27 ♗xg5! fxg5 28 ♖xg5. White then threatens 29 ♗e7, when Black would be forced to return the piece with 29...♖xg2+. Black has a couple of options, the second of which is quite complex:

a) 28...♗f8 allows Black to defend the second rank, but White can force an immediate draw with 29 ♗e7 ♗f7 30 ♗e8+ ♗f8 31 ♗e7 =.

b) 28...♖f7 29 ♗d3! (29 ♗e7? ♗e8! defends) sets Black a difficult defensive task. White has two pawns for the piece and is threatening to win with 30 ♗e7. Play might continue 29...♖f8 (29...♗d5? 30 f6!) 30 ♗e6!? (intending 31 ♗g6

and 32 f6; 30 ♖f4!? is also interesting) 30...♙d8 31 f6 (D), with the further possibilities:



B

b1) 31...♙f7? 32 ♖e5! is a fitting victory for the once humiliated knight.

b2) 31...♙d7?! 32 fxg7 (32 ♖e5 is also strong) 32...♙xg7 33 ♙g6, and something has gone wrong with Black's position.

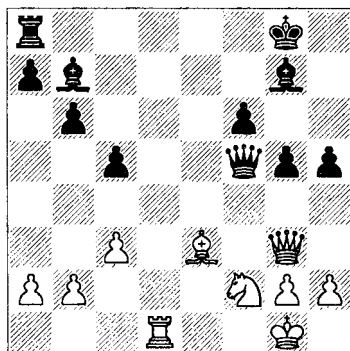
b3) 31...♙xd3 32 ♙e8! ♙d1+ 33 ♖f2 ♙d2+! (an amusing echo of White's 32nd move; neither rook can be taken) 34 ♖f1 ♙a6+ 35 ♖g1 ♙d1+ 36 ♖f2 ♙f1+ 37 ♖g3 ♙xf6 – Mayer.

Black will emerge with a rook and two bishops for a queen and two pawns. White's king position could prove a problem, but Black's own king will also face threats of perpetual check. I would prefer to play Black, but White still has chances, whereas he is simply lost if he doesn't sacrifice the bishop.

These variations pass without mention by both Euwe and Réti. In Réti's case, this may have been a function of his fundamentally narrative style of annotation. The narrative style is a powerful instructional tool, as it allows the annotator to illustrate general rules, but it is less apt when analysing a particular position. Chess is first and foremost a game of analysis and variations. Even very bad positions usually offer at least one opportunity to complicate the game; a narrative style of annotation too often obscures this.

27 ... ♙xf5 (D)

Steinitz's strategy finally pays dividends in the form of a pawn. More important yet is the fact that Black's pieces will soon hold full sway over the board.



W

28 ♙c7	♙d5
29 b3	♙e8
30 c4	♙f7

31	♙c1	♖e2
32	♜f1	♜c2
33	♜g3	♜xa2
34	♜b8+	♙h7
35	♜g3	♙g6
36	h4	g4
37	♞d3??	♜xb3
38	♜c7	♜xd3

0-1

The irony of the knight's fate is amusing.

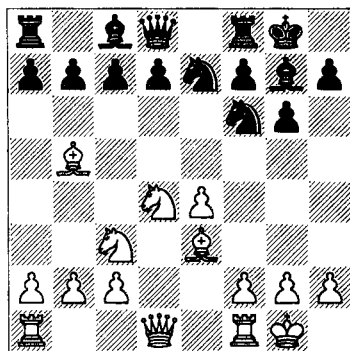
Réti cites another example that has come to be regarded as a classic example of the Steinitzian Restriction Method. In my view, it is a more straightforward example of the power of the two bishops, but as a chess game, it is considerably less interesting than Rosenthal-Steinitz.

Englisch – Steinitz London 1883

1 e4 e5 2 ♞f3 ♞c6 3 ♙b5 g6 4 d4 exd4 5 ♞xd4

Réti thought that 5 ♙g5 was so powerful that it would practically refute Black's opening play. Smyslov, among others, has demonstrated that Black has an acceptable game after 5...f6, followed by kingside development and playing for ...d5 to dissolve the white centre.

5	...	♙g7
6	♙e3	♞f6
7	♞c3	0-0
8	0-0	♞e7!? (D)



W

Black intends to play 9...d5, eliminating White's spatial advantage. We will return to this position shortly, as it was the subject of commentary by both Steinitz and Réti.

9	♜d2?!	d5
10	exd5	♞exd5
11	♞xd5	♜xd5!

White meets 11...♞xd5 with 12 ♙g5.

12	♙e2	♞g4!
----	-----	------

Steinitz prefers to obtain a concrete advantage, i.e., the pair of bishops, rather than to play for 'activity' with 12...♞e4!?, which leaves him with no obviously favourable continuation after 13 ♜d3. The text is a good example of Steinitz's principle of 'the accumulation of small advantages'.

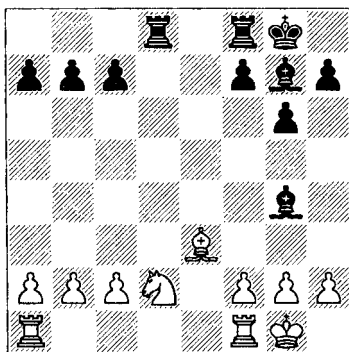
13	♙xg4	♙xg4
14	♞b3	♜xd2

This move passes without comment by Réti, but in the tournament book for London 1883, Steinitz

prefers 14...♔c4!, with the idea of 15...♖ad8 and 16...c5.

15 ♖xd2 ♖ad8! (D)

There is no reason to play 15...♗xb2 16 ♖ab1, when White's rook lands on the seventh rank.



W

16 c3

This shields the b-pawn on the long diagonal, but the weakness of d3 will have consequences.

16 ... ♖fe8

17 ♖b3 b6

18 h3 ♗e6

19 ♖fd1

Black has obtained a very large lead in development which allows him to use tactical means to maintain the advantage of the bishops. For instance, on strictly strategic grounds, White would have liked to play 19 ♗d4 here, as it would neutralize the black king's bishop. However, then Steinitz would cement his advantage with 19...♗xb3 20 axb3 (20 ♗xg7? ♗c4 21 ♗f6

♗d6 wins the exchange) 20...♗xd4 21 cxd4 a5.

Still, Steinitz gives 19 ♗d4 as superior, with the idea of bringing the knight to the more active f3-square. Englisch probably rejected it out of a desire to keep the a-pawn shielded on the a2-g8 diagonal.

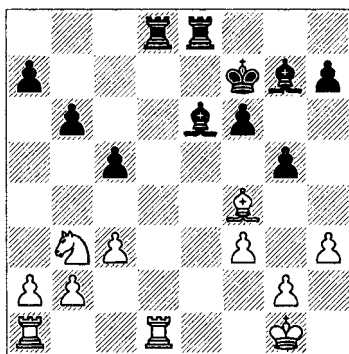
19 ... c5

20 ♗g5 f6!

Black consistently steals diagonals from the sole white bishop. Another advantage of the text is that it allows the black king to come toward the centre.

21 ♗f4 ♗f7

22 f3 g5! (D)



W

Once again limiting the white bishop. Englisch decides to cede the d-file, since 23 ♗e3?? drops a piece after 23...♖xd1+ 24 ♖xd1 ♗xb3. Réti agrees with this decision, because he didn't think that the h2-b8 diagonal is particularly attractive. Steinitz thought that

White should have played 23 ♖c7, which indicates a preference for the h2-b8 diagonal.

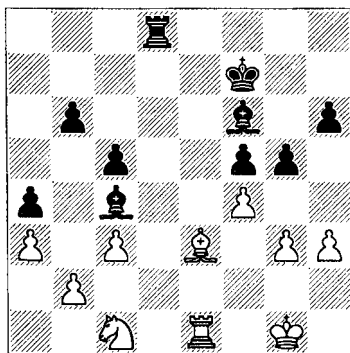
23 ♜xd8 ♜xd8
24 ♖e3 h6
25 ♜e1 f5
26 f4 ♙f6!

Steinitz maintains kingside tension. An exchange at g5 will not be particularly attractive for White, as Black then has the option of securing a space advantage with ...hxg5 or of challenging the white bishop, which has become a key defender of d2, by ...♙xg5.

27 g3 a5!

This gains space and threatens to destroy the white queenside by advancing the pawn down to a3.

28 ♖c1 a4
29 a3 ♙c4! (D)



W

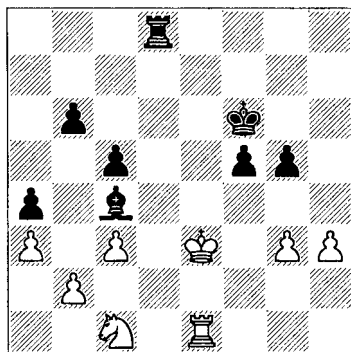
Steinitz ensures that the knight will be subject to exchange if it attempts to re-enter the game via e2. Black now has his pieces on their

best squares and is ready to begin the decisive breakthrough.

30 ♙f2 gxf4!
31 ♙xf4 ♙g5
32 ♙xg5 hxg5

Black has eliminated the white bishop, which was useful for defending the entry square at d2. Furthermore, Black has the additional possibility of creating a passed pawn with ...f4.

33 ♙e3 ♙f6 (D)



W

34 h4 gxh4

Steinitz is in the pleasant situation of having multiple good continuations. For instance, he could also have secured the outside passed pawn for himself with 34...f4+ 35 gxf4 gxh4. I suspect that Steinitz chose the text-move as he had already worked out the game continuation to a dead win.

35 gxh4 ♙e8+
36 ♙f2 ♜xe1
37 ♙xe1 ♙e5

38 ♖e2

This results in a lost king and pawn ending, but otherwise White is effectively playing without his knight.

38 ... ♙xe2

39 ♖xe2 ♙f4

40 c4 ♙g4

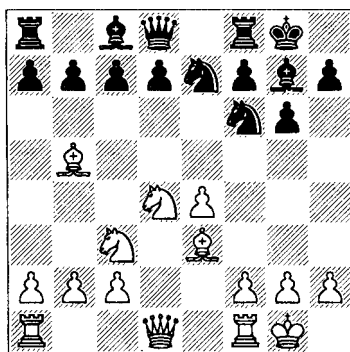
41 ♖e3 f4+

42 ♖e4 f3

43 ♖e3 ♙g3

0-1

The position after 8...♖e7!? (D) is very interesting, as Steinitz's results at London 1883 indicate that it is surprisingly difficult for White to prevent the freeing ...d7-d5 advance:



W

1) 9 ♖c4 d5 10 exd5 ♖exd5 11 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 12 ♖xd5 ♗xd5, and Black had obtained a typical advantage (the two bishops) in the game Sellman-Steinitz, London 1883 (0-1 in 32 moves).

2) 9 h3 c6 10 ♖d3 d5 11 exd5 ♖exd5 12 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 13 c3 ♖xe3 14 fxe3 ♗g5, and Black's advantage was indisputable in Mackenzie-Steinitz, London 1883 (0-1 in 48 after mutual blunders).

3) Steinitz advocates the odd and apparently pointless 9 f3 in the tournament book for London 1883.

4) Réti offers 9 e5 ♖e8 10 ♖f4. Black can then play to undermine the white centre with 10...f6 or 10...d6, but 11 ♖e1 should still keep some advantage for White. In any event, White should perhaps play 9 e5 even if it leads to no more than an equal game, as the other continuations (with the possible exception of '5') allow Black to free his game and obtain good squares for his pieces.

5) 9 ♖g5 h6 10 ♖h4 c6 11 ♖e2 g5 12 ♖g3 d5 13 e5!? ♖e4 14 ♖xe4 dxe4 15 c3 ♖g6 16 ♗c2 ♖xe5 17 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 18 ♗xe4 ♖e8 19 ♗d3 c5 20 ♖f5 ♖xf5 21 ♗xf5 ♖xh2+ 22 ♖xh2 ♖xe2 23 ♖ad1 ♗b6 24 ♖d7 ♖f8 25 ♖fd1 ♗xb2 26 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 27 ♗g6+ ♖f8 28 ♖d8+ 1-0 Dvoirys-Malaniuk, USSR Championship 1989. This interesting game seems to be the only modern grandmaster game featuring the position after Black's eighth move.

Strangely, the position after 8...♖e7 is not to be found in *ECO* C, so we must be satisfied with Dvoirys-Malaniuk in the above note. It is also noteworthy that the

same position arose in Blackburne-Steinitz, London 1883, with the insignificant difference that the white bishop was at e2 rather than at b5 (that game arose out of a Three Knights).

Steinitz's games with and commentary on the position arising after 8...♘e7!? are intriguing, as they raise questions about nineteenth century chess. It is clear that Steinitz considered the position after 8...♘e7!? acceptable for Black; it is also clear that he considered the typical positions where Black acquires the bishop pair extremely favourable. The thoughts of his opponents are far less clear, since they kept allowing the same type of position to arise. There are two possibilities: that his opponents considered White's position sound or that the level of opening preparation in 1883 was extremely poor. The second scenario seems more likely.

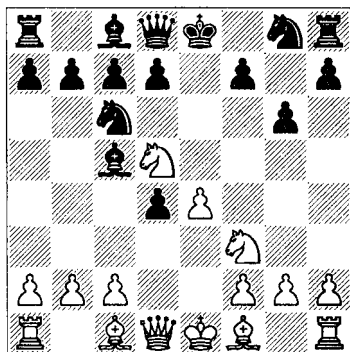
The question of how quickly Steinitz's contemporaries picked up his ideas is one that arises as a matter of historical curiosity. Many a simplistic formulation of chess history has it that such great contemporaries and successors as Charousek, Lasker, Pillsbury, Tarasch, and Zukertort understood much or all of Steinitz's discoveries, but that 'lesser masters' did not. This strikes me as simply wrong, despite the evidence of some

of the games at London 1883. For instance, in the following game, Rosenthal gives Steinitz a lesson in the power of two bishops versus bishop and knight. The characteristics of the pawn structure are not identical to Rosenthal-Steinitz, Vienna 1873, but the fact remains that Rosenthal clearly knew how to use the bishops.

Rosenthal – Steinitz

London 1883

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 g6 4 d4
exd4 5 ♘d5 ♗c5?! (D)



W

Steinitz had a materialistic element to his style; it doesn't show to favour in this example. The d-pawn will prove difficult to hold in any event, but by developing the bishop to c5, the holes at h6 and f6 become important weaknesses.

Steinitz demonstrated Black's correct path three weeks later in

another game Rosenthal-Steinitz, London 1883: 5...♙g7! 6 ♙g5 ♖ce7, when *ECO C* considers the position equal.

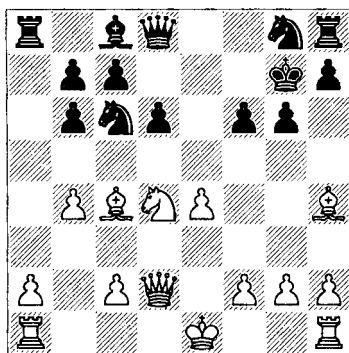
6 ♙c4 d6
7 ♙g5 f6
8 ♙h4 ♖f8

Steinitz gives 8...h5, threatening to win a piece with 9...g5 and 10...h4, as 'the correct play'.

9 ♖d2 ♖g7?

White threatened 10 ♙xf6 ♖xf6 11 ♖h6+, but Steinitz gives 9...g5 10 ♙g3 ♖e5 as fine for Black.

10 b4 ♙b6
11 ♖xb6 axb6
12 ♖xd4 (D)



B

And so Rosenthal has regained his pawn and obtained the bishop pair. Steinitz's position, on the other hand, has little to recommend it, as his development lags and his kingside is weak.

12 ... ♖e7
13 f3 ♖e5

14 ♙b3?

The bishop should have retreated to e2, as now Black could force the exchange of White's king's bishop by Steinitz's 14...c5!, with the threat 15...c4.

14 ... ♖h6?
15 0-0 g5?!

Steinitz attempts to secure his dark squares as a line of defence against a white attack with f3-f4. Such a plan is also known from the Modern Benoni, but it has obvious drawbacks, e.g., the weakening of f5 and the general weakening of the kingside.

Steinitz gives the immediate 15...♖ef7 as correct. Note that 15...c5? 16 f4! favours White.

16 ♙g3 ♖ef7
17 ♖ae1 c5?

This weakens the queenside to no purpose, as Black no longer threatens to play ...c5-c4. The direct 17...♙d7 is superior.

18 ♖b5 ♖d8
19 f4!?

Rosenthal elects to play for a direct kingside attack, but simply 19 ♖d1 (Steinitz) wins the backward d-pawn.

19 ... g4
20 ♖c3 ♙e6
21 ♖d5 ♙xd5
22 ♙xd5

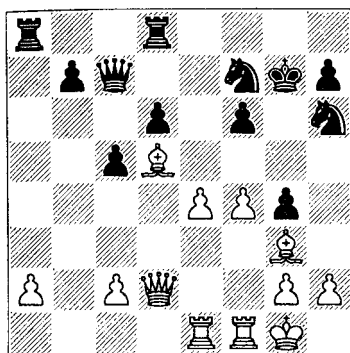
Now White has obtained two bishops for two knights and has chances of breaking through on practically any part of the board.

22 ... ♖c7

23 bxc5

Steinitz queries this move and suggests 23 ♖c3, intending 24 e5, as superior. In fact, there is nothing wrong with the text.

23 ... bxc5 (D)



W

24 ♖b1?!

Steinitz doesn't comment on this move, but it is surprising that both he and Rosenthal missed the direct and logical 24 e5!, with the point being that White mates after 24...dxe5 25 fxe5 fxe5 26 ♖xe5! ♜xe5 27 ♖g5+. Black would have had to sit tight after 24 e5!, but then White has the pleasant choice of exposing the king with 25 exf6+ (this is probably best) or playing for a passed pawn with 25 e6 – Mayer.

24 ... ♖a7

25 ♖b5 ♖e8

26 ♖fb1 ♜d8

27 e5 ♜f5

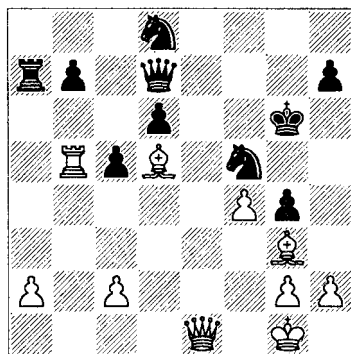
28 exf6+ ♜xf6

29 ♖c3+ ♜g6

30 ♖e1 ♖xe1+

31 ♖xe1 ♖d7 (D)

Steinitz queries this move and offers 31...♖e7 32 ♖e4 ♖e6 33 ♖e2 ♜f6 as best play, when it is his view that White's isolated queen-side pawns give Black the better game. Given that the position is still a middlegame, I think it is premature to award Black the advantage.



W

32 ♖b6 ♜c6

33 ♖h4!

'A very fine move, which paralyses Black's game' – Steinitz.

33 ... ♜xh4

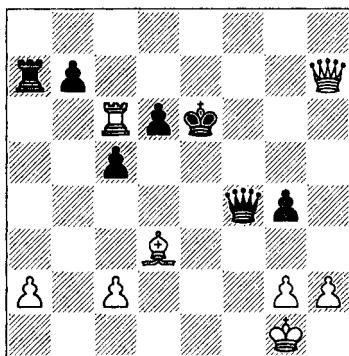
34 ♖xh4 ♖f5??

The text allows White to mop up. For better or worse, Black had to try 34...h6! 35 ♖e4+ ♜g7 36 f5, when the g4-pawn will drop – Mayer.

35 ♖c4! ♖xf4

36 ♖d3+ ♜f7

37 ♖xh7+ ♔e6
38 ♜xc6 (D)



B

White uses a pin to win a piece. The rest is given solely for the record: 38... ♖e3+ 39 ♔f1 ♖f4+ 40 ♔g1 ♖e3+ 41 ♔f1 ♖f4+ 42 ♔e2 ♖e5+ 43 ♔d1 bxc6 44 ♖xa7 ♖xh2 45 ♔f1! ♖g1 46 ♖a6 ♖d4+ 47 ♔c1 ♖f4+ 48 ♔d1 ♖d4+ 49 ♖d3 ♖a1+ 50 ♔d2 ♖xa2 51 ♖c4+ ♖xc4 52 ♔xc4+ d5 53 ♔e2 g3 54 ♔e3 ♔e5 55 c4! ♔f5 56 ♔f3 ♔e5 57 ♔xg3 ♔d4 58 ♔f4 dxc4 59 g4 1-0

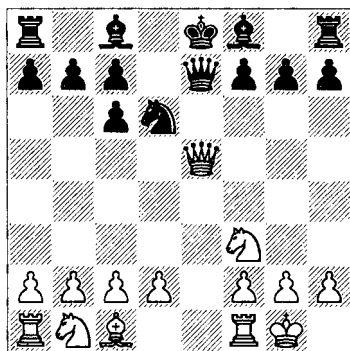
Not to belabour the obvious, but Rosenthal's use of the two bishops, along with his exploitation of the weakness of d5, and the to and fro 'tacking' from kingside to queenside to kingside, is quite reminiscent of Steinitz's play at its best.

The strength of the bishop pair in such positions, as in the games Rosenthal-Steinitz, Vienna 1873

and Englisch-Steinitz, was not lost on the younger members of what has come to be known as the Classical School. Tarrasch especially showed a thorough command of the Steinitzian Restriction Method.

B. Richter – Tarrasch Nuremberg 1888

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♖c6 3 ♔b5 ♖f6 4 0-0
♜xe4 5 ♖e2 ♖d6 6 ♔xc6 dxc6 7
♖xe5+ ♖e7 (D)



W

The preconditions for the Steinitzian Restriction Method have been established. Black has obtained the bishop pair and is ready to swap queens. White should undoubtedly have kept queens on by 8 ♖f4 or 8 ♖a5, probing the black queenside, when he might have had some opportunity of benefiting from the state of Black's kingside development. Unfortunately, Richter accommodated Tarrasch with...

- 8 ♖e1?! ♔xe5
 9 ♖xe5+ ♙e7
 10 d3 f6!

White probably thought that Black would have difficulty castling. In fact, Tarrasch demonstrates that his king is better placed than if it had already castled, as the position is tending toward an endgame and his king is already in the centre.

Black's central pawn position – or lack thereof – is typical of the Steinitzian precedents, but here White still has a d-pawn. This gives him potentially better chances than the absence of both centre pawns, as the d-pawn may help support the knight at a variety of central posts, e.g., e4 or c4, although neither of these squares is absolutely secure.

- 11 ♔e1 ♙f7
 12 ♙f4 g5!

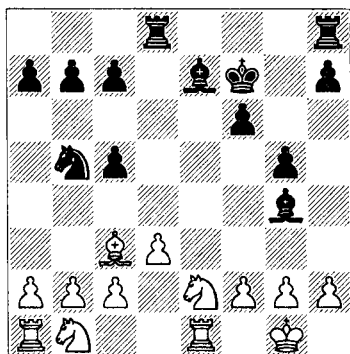
Englich-Steinitz has already familiarized us with this method of limiting the opposing minor pieces.

- 13 ♙d2 ♙g4
 14 ♘d4 c5!

The white knight is expelled from the centre and Black prepares to use d4 as an outpost for his remaining knight.

- 15 ♘e2 ♘b5!
 16 ♙c3 ♖ad8 (D)

Tarrasch shows keen positional judgement. He could obtain two bishops versus two knights by the immediate capture at c3, but that



W

would still leave him with a somewhat crippled queenside pawn structure. Instead, he prefers to play the knight to the outpost at d4. The knight will be so strongly placed that Richter will eventually be forced to exchange it and un-double Black's pawns, in which case Tarrasch will have added a substantial space advantage to the bishop pair.

- 17 ♘d2 ♘d4
 18 ♙xd4

Richter surrenders his remaining bishop, as he hopes that his knight will have better opportunities of finding play in the resulting semi-closed position.

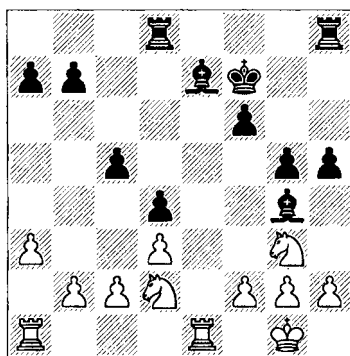
- 18 ... cxd4
 19 a3 c5!

Black has the possibility of setting up what Hans Kmoch called 'the quart grip'. Generally, this will involve advancing his queenside pawns to d4, c5, b5, and a4, at which point various sacrificial attacks

will allow Black to queen a pawn. We will soon see an example of the quart grip in action.

The quart grip is a special case of what Nimzowitsch termed 'the qualitative pawn majority'. The typical pawn majority is quantitative, e.g., three pawns to two in a particular sector of the board. The qualitative pawn majority, as the name implies, is a case where one's pawns are substantially superior in quality to the opposing pawns in a particular sector of the board. The quart grip, which derives its power from a spatial advantage, is one of the typical examples of the qualitative pawn majority.

20 ♖g3 h5! (D)



W

Tarrasch increases his kingside space advantage. Note that there are no exploitable holes in Black's position, despite the fact that he has made a number of pawn moves.

21 f3 ♔d7

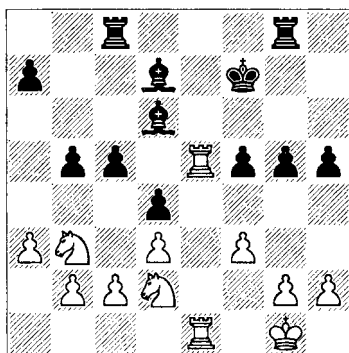
22 ♕e2 b5
23 ♖ae1 ♔f8
24 ♘ge4 ♖g8
25 ♘b3 ♖c8
26 ♘ed2 ♔d6

Now might have been a good time to slip in 26...h4, with the idea of taking en passant if White later plays for control of e4 with g2-g4 (c.f. the note to White's move 30).

27 ♘e4 ♔f8
28 ♘ed2 f5

Tarrasch takes the e4-square from the knights and cramps the white position even further.

29 ♖e5! ♔d6?? (D)



W

This should have thrown away the fruit of all Black's labours, in spite of the fact that Tarrasch attaches no special marks to the move in his annotations in *Dreihundert Schachpartien*. Simply 29...h4 would have maintained the advantage, as the white rook does not have an exploitable target.

30 ♖5e2??

Now the game reverts to its strategic course and White once again has a very difficult position. Richter should have jumped at the opportunity to play 30 ♖d5! ♖g6 (30...♖c6 31 ♘xc5 wins a pawn) 31 g4! hxg4 32 fxg4. The black position is then surprisingly difficult, as the automatic 32...fxg4 33 ♘e4 reveals that the black pieces have lost their cohesiveness. Further, his position is riddled with weaknesses, for example, c5, d6, f6, and g5. Black might try 32...♖f6, but simply 33 ♖f1 is very good for White, as it's impossible to prevent the white knight from reaching e4 in one way or another – Mayer.

Curiously, Tarrasch never realized how flawed this game is. He gives simply "After 30 ♖d5 ♖c6, the white rook would be very much endangered."

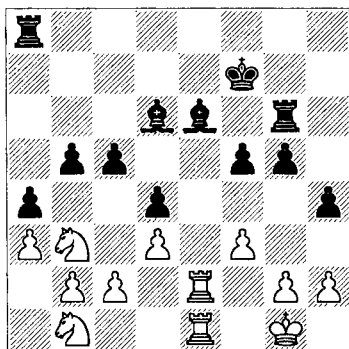
As with Rosenthal-Steinitz, Vienna 1873, it must be stressed that even very good games nearly always have a 'blip' where a tactical interlude could have thrown a spanner in the strategic works. The difficult task facing the defender in a strategically inferior position is remaining alert for an opportunity that may never arise and – even more difficult – judging when the time is right and taking decisive action if the tactical chance arises.

30 ... ♖a8
31 ♘a5

Momentarily preventing the advance of the a-pawn to a4, which would complete the formation of the quart grip on the white queenside.

31 ... ♖ab8
32 ♘ab3 h4
33 ♖h1 ♖g6
34 ♖g1 ♙e6
35 ♖f2 ♖a8
36 ♖fe2 a5
37 ♘b1 a4 (D)

The quart grip is finally in place. Black's winning plan is to create a passed pawn on the queenside.



W

38 ♘3d2 c4
39 ♘f1 ♖c8
40 ♖h1 c3
41 bxc3 dxc3
42 ♘e3 b4
43 ♘c4 ♙xc4
44 dxc4 ♖xc4
45 ♖e3 bxa3
46 ♘xc3 ♙b4

0-1

A sterling example of the Steinitzian Restriction Method. I regard this game as even better than such prototypes as Rosenthal-Steinitz, Vienna 1873, and Englisch-Steinitz, since Black had to address the fact that White had a centre pawn. Further, Tarrasch's method of gaining space across the entire board is quite impressive, even though the players exchanged blunders at moves 29 and 30.

Verdict: The Steinitzian Restriction Method had a major and lasting impact on the perception of the relative strength of bishops and knights. However, as Réti pointed out, it is most effective when a fair

degree of simplification has occurred. This view is borne out anecdotally by the discovery that of the three 'classic' games examined in this chapter (Rosenthal-Steinitz, Vienna 1873, Englisch-Steinitz, and Richter-Tarrasch), the only one that couldn't have been played much better by the loser was Englisch-Steinitz, which is also the most materially reduced of the trio.

In my view, whenever a player substantially overestimates his or her prospects with the bishop pair, it's likely that an exaggerated belief in the efficacy of the Steinitzian Restriction Method must take at least some of the blame.

3 Chigorin and the Knight Pair – The Traditional Case for Success

You have probably heard that Mikhail Chigorin was a ‘champion of the knights’ who showed, say, a ‘marked preference’ for knights over bishops. This received wisdom is part of every chess player’s cultural education; we all ‘know’ that Chigorin favoured knights over bishops, in contrast to Steinitz, his great rival.

Is this view correct and where did it come from? There are two ways of demonstrating if Chigorin actually favoured knights over bishops. The first approach uses his games as ‘texts’ that reveal his thoughts on chess strategy. The believers in Chigorin’s alleged knight fetish invariably point to his queen’s pawn defence, which runs 1 d4 d5 2 c4 ♖c6, with a subsequent ...♗g4. (Chigorin was also known to play 1 d4 d5 2 ♖f3 ♗g4.) Chigorin’s Defence normally results in Black giving up one or both bishops for knights, in return for a lead in development and a marginally superior pawn structure. We shall examine many of these

games in this and the following chapter.

Yet examples of Chigorin’s Defence in Chigorin’s *oeuvre* are relatively rare. Much more common are examples of Chigorin playing the white side of the Evans Gambit, an opening in which the bishops can generate tremendous attacking force for the gambiteer. Similarly, while Chigorin often played closed openings, e.g., the Closed Sicilian as White or a form of proto-King’s Indian Attack against the French, he did not make any special effort to exchange his bishops for knights in these games, despite the closed nature of the resulting positions. If we go solely on the basis of Chigorin’s games, then it’s clear that he ‘preferred’ bishops to knights.

A second approach is to turn to Chigorin’s writings and see what he says on the subject of bishops and knights. Chigorin was a prolific writer and probably addressed the relative value of the minor pieces in his long writing career. Unfortunately, he wrote primarily

in Russian and most of his writings appeared in newspapers and periodicals, e.g., the magazine published by the St Petersburg Chess Club. These writings have probably not survived the travails of twentieth century Russia; I am certainly unaware of any comprehensive 'complete works' of Chigorin's writings.

Therefore neither his games nor his writings can be blamed for the myth that Chigorin favoured knights over bishops. The third and final possibility is that influential commentators may have written that he favoured the knights over the bishops. Yet an examination of the 'usual suspects', for example, Botvinnik, Grekov, Kotov, Lasker, Réti, Steinitz, Tarrasch, et al, fails to turn up any claims of this nature.

In 1996, I asked the world-wide readership of the Usenet newsgroup 'rec.games.chess.misc' if they knew where the 'Chigorin favoured knights' party line may have started. No one could supply me with any leads, even those readers with substantial libraries of Russian chess literature. Later, I had occasion to speak with IM John Watson on this subject. Watson, despite his extensive knowledge of Chigorin's games, was unable to point to where this falsehood first surfaced.

My opinion is that neither Chigorin nor the major commentators

on his play believed that he favoured knights over bishops. Instead, certain lesser and less attentive writers jumped from the special case of Chigorin's Defence to the much broader claim that Chigorin favoured knights over bishops. The claim sounded reasonable, perhaps, to those not acquainted with Chigorin's games. Today it has become the chess equivalent of an urban legend.

Chigorin has been an underappreciated figure in English-speaking countries. Fortunately, a great deal was done to rectify this by the publication of *Mikhail Chigorin Selected Games* in 1987. The authorship of this excellent book is granted to Bogoljubow, who published a book on Chigorin in Russian in 1926. In fact, *Mikhail Chigorin Selected Games* is much more than Bogoljubow's work, as Colin Leach (the book's editor) also collated a lot of annotations by other sources into something that is much more than Bogoljubow's original work. I have used these various annotations extensively, as you'll soon notice by the numerous cases of 'cited in *MCSG*' that are sprinkled throughout the next two chapters.

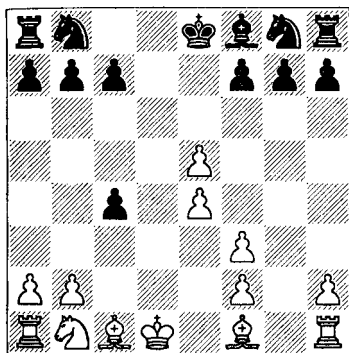
Let's turn our attention to those games of Chigorin's that other writers delight in using to demonstrate his supposed preference for knights.

Steinitz – Chigorin
Havana World Championship
 Match (6) 1889

1 ♖f3 d5 2 d4 ♙g4 3 c4 ♙xf3 4
 gxf3 dxc4!? 5 e4?

Steinitz later preferred 5 e3. In
 the second edition of *ECOD*, Cvetk-
 ović and V. Sokolov give '5 e3! ±'.

5 ... e5!
 6 dxe5 ♙xd1+
 7 ♙xd1 (D)



B

Both players have approached
 the opening in what later genera-
 tions would consider their signa-
 ture styles. Steinitz has given up
 the right to castle for a pawn and
 the bishop pair, while Chigorin has
 ceded the bishops – and a pawn –
 for the smoother development and
 the better pawn structure.

7 ... ♙c6
 8 f4 ♙d8+!

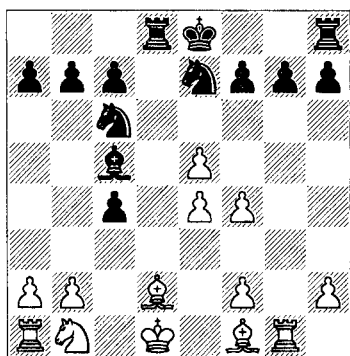
It seems more natural to play
 8...0-0-0+ but then f7 and g7 could

become targets, as the king would
 not be available to defend them.

9 ♙d2 ♙c5
 10 ♙g1

If White doesn't intend to cap-
 ture at g7, then this move is a mis-
 take. Steinitz preferred 10 ♙xc4
 (cited in *MCSG*).

10 ... ♙ge7 (D)



W

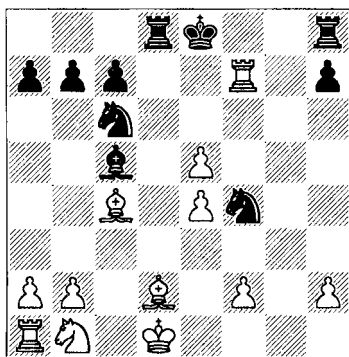
This is awarded an exclamation
 mark by Cvetković and V. Sokolov,
 who misassess the position as
 clearly better for Black. In fact,
 White can improve at move six-
 teen.

11 ♙xc4

It's unclear whether Steinitz
 could have played 11 ♙xg7!? ♙g6,
 when White has two interesting
 continuations:

a) 12 e6 safeguards the rook
 and bids to activate it along the
 seventh rank. The drawback, of
 course, is that it does nothing for
 White's lagging development.

b) 12 ♖xc4!? ♜xf4 13 ♜xf7 (D) is critical:



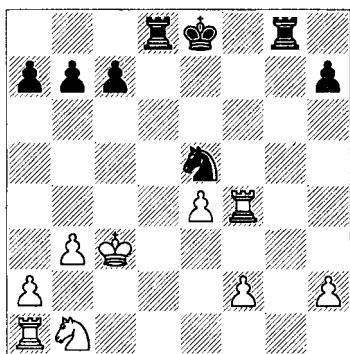
B

b1) White should be better in the exchange-down ending that arises after 13...♜d3 ('!' – Bogoljubow, cited in *MCSG*) 14 ♖xd3 ♜xf7 15 ♖c4+ and 16 f4, because the mass of passed pawns looks dangerous – Mayer. Bogoljubow gave '13...♜d3!' with no further comment or evaluation, so it's not clear if he saw the exchange sacrifice.

b2) 13...♜xe5, with yet another subdivision:

b21) 14 ♜xc7 ♖xf2 is clearly better for Black according to Steinitz. This is debatable after the further 15 ♖b5+ ♜f8 16 ♜xb7 – Mayer. White has two extra pawns and his dark-squared bishop threatens to become active on a variety of diagonals, e.g., c1-h6, a1-h8, and a3-f8. I don't see enough compensation for two pawns.

b22) 14 ♜xf4 ♜xc4 is given by Chigorin (cited in *MCSG*). Bogoljubow continues this with 15 ♜c2 ♜g8 16 b3 ♖d4 17 ♖c3 ♖xc3 18 ♜xc3 (18 ♜xc3 ♜d2+ forces mate) 18...♜e5 (D), which he assesses as winning for Black.



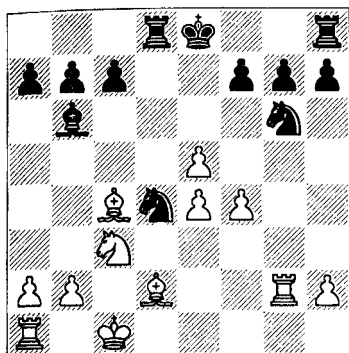
W

Again, this strikes me as questionable after the further 19 ♜f5, when White gains a tempo to continue his development. It's true that Black has some active pieces, but we're in an endgame and White's connected passed pawns should be given their due.

11 ...	♜g6
12 ♜c1	♖xf2
13 ♜g2	♖b6
14 ♜c3	♜d4 (D)

Black can stir up interesting complications with 14...♜xd2!? 15 ♜xd2 (15 ♜xd2? ♖e3 is good for Black) 15...♜xf4 16 ♜xg7 ♜xe5 17 ♖b3 ♜f8, when it looks as if the active black minor pieces will run

down the rook, but White emerges with the better position after 18 ♖xf7+! ♜xf7 19 ♜f1 ♜e5 20 ♜xf4+ – Mayer.



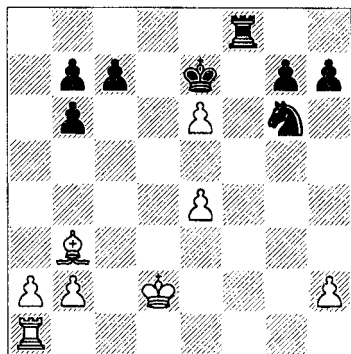
W

- 15 ♜d5 ♜f3
16 ♜xb6?

Now the white position slides downhill. It's odd that Steinitz did not play to retain his bishops with 16 ♜c3! (noted by both Steinitz and Chigorin) 16... ♜xf4 17 ♜xg7 (17 ♜xf4? ♜e3+ should be a well-known theme by now) 17... ♜e6 – Chigorin. Then Steinitz has at least retained the bishop pair, but Black is ready to continue 18... ♜d4!, which neutralizes White's queen's bishop and makes the doubled e-pawns an important feature of the position.

- 16 ... ♜xd2
17 ♜xd2 axb6
18 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8
19 ♜xf7 ♜xf4
20 ♜d2 ♜f8

- 21 ♜b3 ♜g6
22 e6 ♜e7 (D)



W

The complications have resolved themselves in Black's favour. White's passed e-pawn isn't going anywhere against proper play, while Chigorin's knight is superior to Steinitz's bishop.

- 23 ♜g1 ♜f2+
24 ♜e3 ♜xh2
25 ♜g5

It looks better to try the immediate 25 ♜f1!, but then Black obtains a clear advantage with 25... ♜h3+! 26 ♜e2 ♜e5 27 ♜f5 ♜xb3 (but certainly not 27... ♜d6?? 28 ♜xe5!) 28 axb3 – Vasquez, who assesses the position as equal (cited in *MCSG*). However, the connected kingside passed pawns should cause White a great deal of trouble after 28... ♜xe6 – Mayer.

- 25 ... ♜h3+

Black could obtain an even better version of the previous note

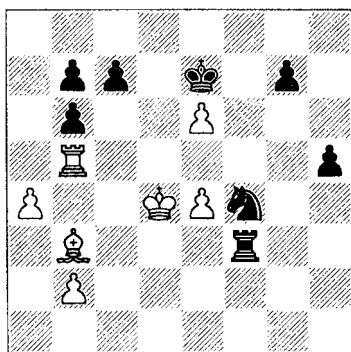
with 25...♖xb2 26 ♜f5 ♖xb3+, but it's unnecessary – Mayer.

26 ♖d4 ♜f3

Black also does well after 26...c5+ 27 ♖c4 ♜e3 – Mayer.

27 ♜b5 ♘f4

28 a4 h5 (D)



W

Now the black h-pawn is able to sail in, despite White's best efforts at breaking through on the queen-side.

29 a5 h4

30 axb6 c6

31 ♜f5 ♘e2+

32 ♖c5 ♜xf5+

33 exf5 h3

34 ♙a4 h2

35 ♙xc6 bxc6

36 b7 h1♖

37 b8♗ ♖c1+

0-1

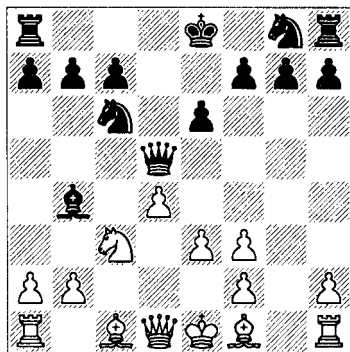
Chigorin's strategic masterpiece in the handling of two knights versus two bishops is undoubtedly his

game against Emanuel Lasker at Hastings 1895. It's a fascinating struggle, with uneven play by both sides, but Lasker missed at least one win.

Em. Lasker – Chigorin

Hastings 1895

1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3 ♙g4 3 c4 ♙xf3 4 gxf3 ♘c6 5 ♘c3 e6 6 e3 ♙b4 7 cxd5 ♖xd5 (D)



W

Chigorin typically recaptured with a piece in such positions so as to retain the option of using d5. The drawback to this approach is that it gives White a majority of pawns in the centre, so Black's middlegame strategy will revolve around restraining the white centre.

8 ♙d2 ♙xc3

9 bxc3 ♘ge7

This development of the knight leaves Black with the option of

later using his f-pawn to restrain or attack the white centre. The knight can also help indirectly protect the g-pawn from ♖h1-g1-xg7, since ...♗g6 and ...♝f8 would then trap the white rook.

Of course, White has two bishops versus two knights; he also has two pawns to one in the centre, with his bishops' pawns supporting his centre pawns. On strictly classical grounds, White must be better, but Chigorin was always willing to play these positions out of his defence. Why?

For one thing, the white pawns are somewhat scattered, so Black might ultimately benefit from that. Further, the white king will be slightly exposed wherever it finally resides, as the pawn cover on both sides of the board has been disrupted. The king might prove reasonably safe in the centre, hiding behind the mass of centre pawns, but ...e5 or ...f7-f5-f4 could open lines against it. Finally, while it's true that White has the bishop pair, it's difficult for both of them to achieve activity at the same time. If they stay in their current formation, then the king's bishop has activity, but the queen's bishop is stifled. On the other hand, the advance e3-e4 will open the c1-h6 diagonal for the queen's bishop, but it will also shut down the b1-h7 and h1-a8 diagonals for the king's bishop. Further, e3-e4 will make the white

centre a bit shakier and prone to attack.

This type of position is consequently difficult for both sides and presents problems that only strategic play of a very high order will solve.

10 ♖g1

In the tournament book for Hastings 1895, Steinitz gives 10 e4 ♖h5 11 ♖b1 – threatening 12 ♖b5 – as 'much stronger'. This was tested in a consultation game Pillsbury and Blackburne vs Chigorin and Schiffers sometime during or immediately after Hastings 1895. The Anglo-American team won that game, but neither Pillsbury nor Chigorin must have been too impressed by the result, as the line wasn't featured in any of their later Chigorin Defence games.

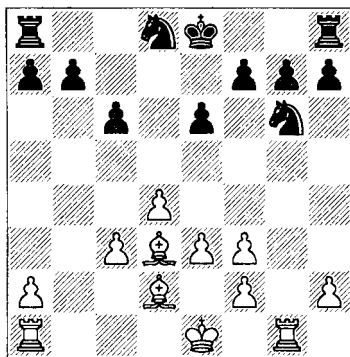
Another interesting continuation is Romanovsky's 10 ♖b3, with the point that 10...♖xf3 11 ♖g1 opens the position for the king's bishop, while 10...♖xb3 11 axb3 improves White's pawn structure and gives him a better ending than he later obtains (cited in *MCSG*).

10 ...	♖h5
11 ♖b3	♗d8
12 ♖b5+	

It seems mistaken to exchange queens here, though White doesn't lose his advantage by doing so. Steinitz preferred 12 ♖g3 ♖xh2 13 e4 ♖h5 14 c4, when the bishops

and the centre pawns give White a lot of play for his pawn.

- 12 ... ♖xb5
 13 ♙xb5+ c6
 14 ♙d3 ♘g6 (D)



W

15 f4

Steinitz doesn't go so far as to query the text, but he considers it pointless unless White dissolves his doubled f-pawns with a later f4-f5. He prefers 15 e4, intending a later c3-c4, while 15...e5 16 dxex5 ♘xe5 17 ♙e2 is favourable to White.

15 ... 0-0

It seems more natural to blockade the doubled f-pawns with 15...f5. This is considered by John Watson in his opening monograph *Queen's Gambit: Chigorin Defence*. He concludes that White 'keeps control of the position' after the further 16 h4! ♙f7 17 h5 ♘e7 18 c4, intending 19 ♙c3 and 20 a4. In that case, White has clamped down on Black's potential queenside

majority and created options for his queen's bishop.

16 ♙e2?

This is a mistake, as White should have leapt at the chance to dissolve his doubled f-pawns with 16 f5!, while after the text, Black should have leapt at the chance to fix them with 16...f5!, when Watson assesses the position as ±.

16 ... ♖c8?

17 ♖g3?

Yet another mistake. Levenfish gives 17 f5! exf5 18 ♙xf5 ♖c7 19 c4 as clearly better for White (cited in Watson). Watson comments that "Black has no compensation for the active bishops and strong centre."

After 17 ♖g3, Black should again have played 17...f5!; after Black's failure to do so, White should again have played 18 f5!.

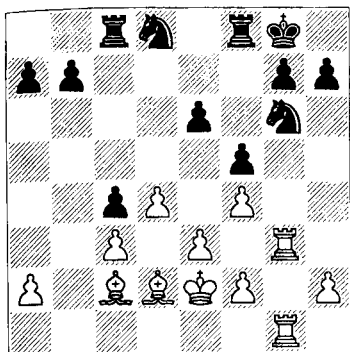
17 ... c5?

18 ♖ag1? c4!

Black establishes a queenside majority and secures d5 as an outpost for a knight.

19 ♙c2 f5! (D)

We finally arrive at the type of position that should have arisen several moves back. Each side has his advantages and disadvantages. White is faced with the problem that his bishops are both awful pieces; in one case because of black pawns, in the other case because of white pawns. However, it is always possible when one has



W

the bishop pair that they may later become liberated. Black has the nice square d5 for a knight and a queenside majority. Further, it is possible that White's centre pawns will become weak when they eventually advance, which they are almost bound to do if his bishops are ever to increase their scope.

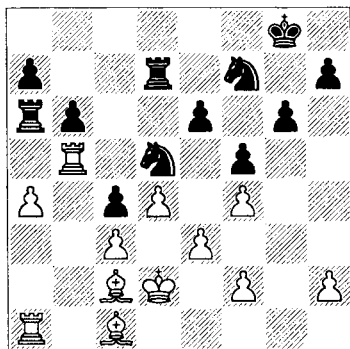
Lasker drifts in the subsequent play and never seems to come up with a firm plan. Still, the difficult nature of the position for both sides is highlighted by the fact that White will later miss plenty of good opportunities even after being 'positionally busted'.

- | | | |
|----|-----|-----|
| 20 | ♙c1 | ♖f7 |
| 21 | ♙a3 | ♖c6 |
| 22 | ♙c5 | ♖a6 |

Chigorin manages to defend his a-pawn, but at a high price; not only is his rook out of play, but its presence on the a-file makes it difficult for him to utilize his queenside majority.

However, Levenfish points out that 22...a6 23 ♙a4 b5 24 ♙c2 allows White to place Black's queenside majority under pressure by means of 25 a4 and 26 ♖b1 (cited in *MCSG*).

- | | | |
|----|------|---------|
| 23 | a4 | ♘c6 |
| 24 | ♖b1 | ♖d7 |
| 25 | ♖gg1 | ♘ge7 |
| 26 | ♖b2 | ♘d5 |
| 27 | ♙d2 | ♖a5 |
| 28 | ♖gb1 | b6 |
| 29 | ♙a3 | g6 |
| 30 | ♖b5 | ♖a6 |
| 31 | ♙c1 | ♘d8 |
| 32 | ♖a1 | ♘f7 (D) |



W

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 33 | ♖bb1 | ♘d6? |
|----|------|------|

Steinitz gives the immediate 33...g5 34 fxg5 ♘xg5 35 ♖a3 ♘e4+ (35...♘f3+ 36 ♙e2 ♘xh2 37 f3 is good for White) 36 ♙xe4 fxe4, and ...♖g7, when "...Black has a winning attack".

I'm not so convinced, as I fail to see a definite win after 37 ♙b2

♖g7 38 ♖e2 ♖g2 39 ♖h1. Perhaps Black can then open a second front with 39...b5!?, but White's possible replies include 40 axb5, 40 a5, and 40 ♖ha1, with none of them looking absolutely clear-cut. Black can usually reduce play to an ending where he has knight and rook against a bad bishop and rook, but White will still have some counter-chances, particularly if he can achieve piece activity.

Bogoljubow gives a similar variation that runs 35 ♖b2 ♖e4+ (35...♖f3+? 36 ♖e2 ♖xh2 37 f3 is once again good for White) 36 ♖xe4 fxe4 37 ♖g1+ ♖g7 38 ♖xg7+ ♖xg7 39 ♖g1+ ♖f7 40 ♖g4 ♖f6, when Black should win the ending after grabbing the a-pawn (cited in *MCSG*). Yet it's unclear how he makes progress if White isn't so quick to unbalance the position by surrendering the a-pawn, e.g., 39 ♖e2 or even 40 ♖a1, putting the onus on Black as to how to convert his advantage.

34 f3!

Lasker finally prepares the advance of his central majority. It's true that the black knights, with the help of the c-pawn and f-pawn, have done a good job of restraining the centre and keeping the white bishop pair at bay, but White's centre has been slowed down, not crippled.

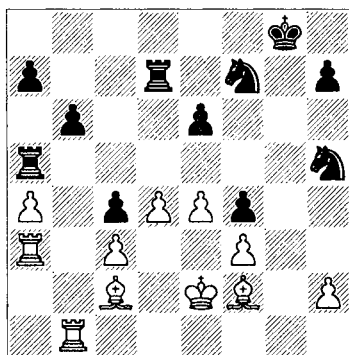
34 ... ♖f7
35 ♖a3 g5?!

Chigorin plays to open up the position in the hope of attacking the white pawns with his knights, but the text is now over-ambitious, as it exposes the black king and the opening of the position should benefit the bishops.

36 ♖e2 gxf4
37 e4! ♖f6
38 ♖xf4!

Steinitz praises the text as superior to 38 exf5 exf5 39 ♖xf5 ♖e7+ 40 ♖f2 ♖d6, when the f-pawn can be defended by either 41...♖d5 or 41...♖h5.

38 ... ♖h5
39 ♖e3 f4
40 ♖f2 ♖a5 (D)

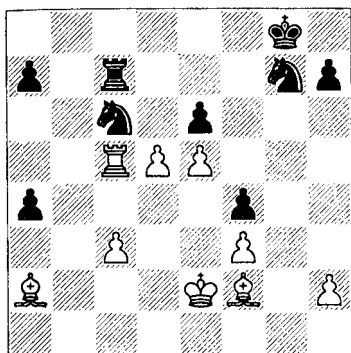


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41 ♖g1+??

Both players have done a good job of playing a complicated position; this should be stressed, as most annotators have approached this game solely by result and have credited Chigorin's play, while

lambasting Lasker's. In fact, White could have obtained a winning position here with 41 e5!, stealing d6 from a black knight and preparing to annex the c4-pawn, when I simply don't see a defence for Black, e.g., 41...♖g7 42 ♖b4! ♜c7 43 ♙b1 ♜d8 44 ♙a2 ♜c6 45 ♜xc4 b5 46 ♜c5 ♜xa4 47 ♜xa4 bxa4 48 d5! (D) wins for White – Mayer.



B

Unfortunately, Steinitz is completely silent on the play from Black's 38th move to White's 47th, while Chigorin and subsequent annotators also failed to spot 41 e5!.

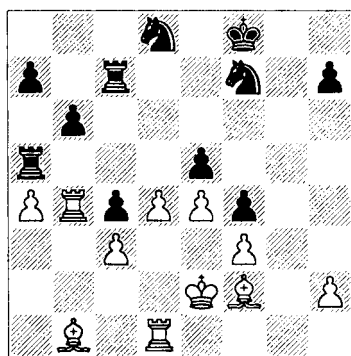
41 ... ♖f8
42 ♜aa1?

Chigorin addressed 42 e5, when he gives the pretty variation 42...b5 43 ♙xh7 ♜xe5! 44 ♜g8+ ♖f7 45 dxe5 b4! 46 cxb4 ♜xe5+ 47 ♖f1 ♜f6, which he assesses as winning for Black. Kan continues with 48 ♜g4 ♜xg4 49 fxg4 ♜d1+ 50 ♖g2 ♜e2, when Black's active rooks and

connected passed pawns should win (cited in MCSG).

This wonderful refutation of 42 e5 makes Chigorin's failure to address 41 e5! all the more frustrating. Perhaps the check at g1 'feels' so natural that he accepted it as a given.

42 ...	e5!
43 ♜ab1	♜g7
44 ♜b4	♜c7
45 ♙b1	♜e6
46 ♜d1	♜ed8 (D)



W

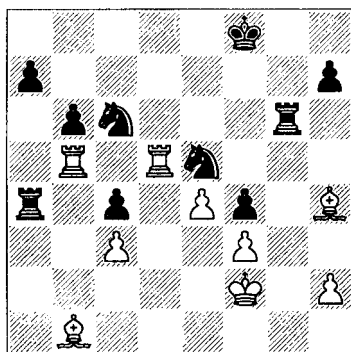
47 ♜d2

The central tension helps Chigorin defend his advanced c-pawn, for example, 47 ♙a2 ♜c6 48 ♜xc4 ♜d6 wins the exchange – Levenfish (cited in MCSG).

For some reason, Bogoljubow gives 47 d5 an exclamation mark; it's hard to believe that Chigorin's knights would have objected to the position becoming even more blocked.

A more interesting try is Levenfish's 47 dxe5! ♖c6 48 ♖b5 ♖xb5 (48...♗xa4 49 e6 is good for White, as his e-pawn is now a factor) 49 axb5 ♖cxe5 50 ♖d5 ♖e7 (cited in *MCSG*). The resulting position appears much more resilient for White than the one that eventually arises in the game. His bishops aren't active and his e-pawn isn't going anywhere, but his rook is active and the b-pawn does a good job of crippling the black queenside majority.

47 ... ♖c6
48 ♖b5 ♖xa4
49 dxe5 ♖fxe5
50 ♖h4 ♖g7
51 ♖f2 ♖g6
52 ♖dd5 (D)



B

52 ... ♖a1?

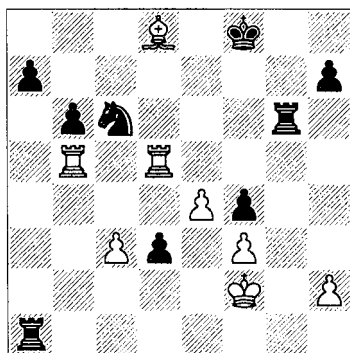
Chigorin misses at least two stronger lines of play:

a) 52...♖a3!? targets the c-pawn, when White cannot win

material with 53 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 54 ♖xe5 owing to 54...♖b3! – Mayer.

b) Even simpler is Steinitz's 52...♖h6 53 ♖g5 ♖xh2+ 54 ♖f1 ♖a1 55 ♖xf4 ♖xb1+ and 56...♖h1+, when "...Black's queenside will win, especially as White's c-pawn will also fall soon."

53 ♖d8 ♖d3+
54 ♖xd3 cxd3 (D)



W

55 ♖xd3??

Only now does the position become completely winning for Black, as he is able to toss up a mating net that will cost White a piece. It's unclear how he wins after Steinitz's 55 ♖c7!, with the point that 55...♖gg1 56 ♖xf4 gives the white king shelter at e3. It's true that Black has the advantage after 55...♖a2+ 56 ♖f1 ♖gg2 57 ♖xd3 ♖xh2 58 ♖g1, but even Steinitz was unable to find a definite win for Black in this position.

55 ... ♖ag1

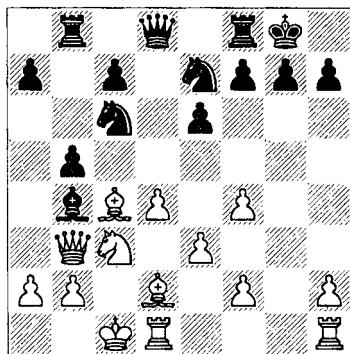
56 ♖f5+ ♔e8
57 ♗g5 ♖6xg5
0-1

The trouble Steinitz and Lasker encountered must have suggested to Chigorin's peers that the plan of leaving the white king in the centre was not the best in the position. After Hastings 1895, the accepted approach for White was to castle queenside and attempt to use the bishops and open g-file to drum up an attack against the black king. However, Chigorin demonstrated repeatedly that Black can generate an effective attack against the white king once it is committed to the queenside.

Pillsbury – Chigorin
St Petersburg 1895/6

1 d4 d5 2 c4 ♘c6 3 ♘f3 ♗g4 4 e3
e6 5 ♘c3 ♗b4 6 ♖b3 ♗xf3 7 gxf3
♘ge7 8 ♗d2 0-0 9 f4 ♖b8 10 0-0-0
dxc4 11 ♗xc4 b5! (D)

Pillsbury may have thought that he was the only one with good attacking chances in this opposite-wing castling situation. In fact, as Chigorin showed in this game and many others, Black can whip up a surprisingly strong attack by advancing his b-pawn and a-pawn. These serve as battering rams and secure the b4-square for a knight. It may also prove possible later to play ...c7-c5, when the white king



W

finds a number of files directly in front of it flying open.

12 ♗d3 ♗xc3
13 ♖xc3 ♖b6!

This rook lift was another Chigorin discovery that served to bolster Black's attacking chances.

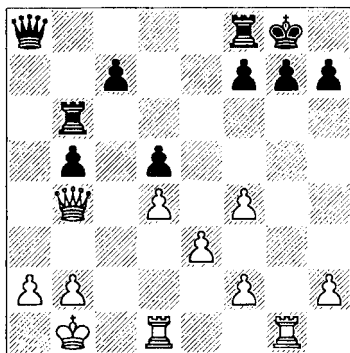
14 ♖b1 a5
15 ♖hg1 ♘b4
16 ♗e4

White's bishops have managed to work up more activity than they typically do in positions of this type.

16 ... ♘ed5
17 ♖c5 ♖a8
18 ♗xb4 axb4
19 ♗xd5 exd5
20 ♖xb4 (D)

White has won a pawn at the cost of exchanging both his bishops for the black knights. The rest of the game is presented solely for the record, as it does not directly address the topic of this book.

20...♖a6 21 ♖b3 ♖b8 22 ♗g5
c6 23 ♗dgl g6 24 f5 b4 25 fxg6



B

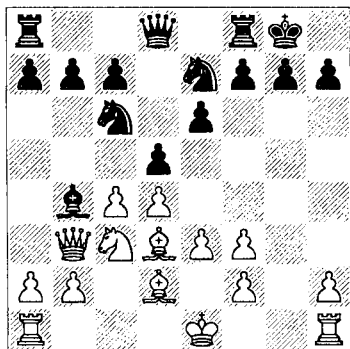
hxc6 26 ♖d3 ♕f8 27 ♙xg6 ♙xa2
 28 ♙g8+ ♕e7 29 ♙xb8 ♙a4 30
 ♙b7+ ♕e6 31 ♕c1 ♙a1+ 32 ♕d2
 ♙xg1 33 ♙c2 ♙xc2+ 34 ♕xc2 ♙g2
 35 ♙xb4 ♙xh2 36 ♙b7 ♙xf2+ 37
 ♕d3 f5 38 ♙c7 ♕d6 39 ♙f7 c5 40
 dxc5+ ♕xc5 41 ♙c7+ ♕d6 42 ♙c2
 ♙f3 43 ♕d4 ♙h3 44 ♙f2 ♕e6 45
 b4 ♙h4+ 46 ♙f4 ♙h1 47 ♕c5 ♙c1+
 48 ♕d4 ♙b1 49 ♕c3 ♙e1 50 ♕d2
 ♙a1 1/2-1/2

An exciting game. Pillsbury was certainly better throughout the complications, but White does not appear to have an obvious win.

Both Chigorin and Pillsbury must have been reasonably satisfied with the course of their St. Petersburg 1895/6 game, for they were to debate the same type of position in another game a few years later. On this occasion, Chigorin showed that he had learned how to cause the white king even greater problems.

Pillsbury – Chigorin London 1899

1 d4 d5 2 c4 ♘c6 3 ♘f3 ♙g4 4 e3
 e6 5 ♘c3 ♙b4 6 ♙b3 ♙xf3 7 gxf3
 ♘ge7 8 ♙d2 0-0 9 ♙d3 (D)



B

An attempted improvement on the 9 f4 of Pillsbury-Chigorin, St Petersburg 1895/6. It should be noted here that Pillsbury, unlike many of his contemporaries, was in the habit of doing extensive opening preparation, so it seems likely that the text was an attempt at a prepared improvement on 9 f4, rather than a spur-of-the-moment decision.

9 ... ♙b8
 10 cxd5 ♘xd5
 11 0-0-0

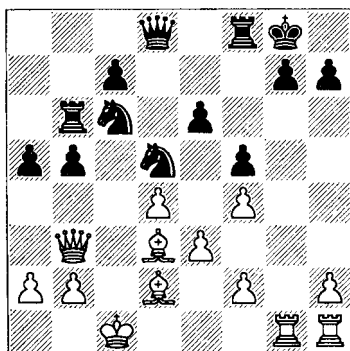
Hoffer, who wrote the tournament book for London 1899, suggests 11 0-0, but he overlooked that Black can play 11... ♙g5+ 12 ♕h1 ♘xd4. However, Graham Burgess

points out that White then has 13 exd4 ♖xd2 14 ♜xd5 exd5 15 ♜fd1 (15 ♜ad1 ♖f4 16 ♖xb4 ♖xf3+ 17 ♜g1 f5 18 ♜fe1 ♜f6) 15...♖xf2 16 ♖xb4 ♖xf3+ 17 ♜g1, when it might be best for Black to take the perpetual check.

11 ... ♜xc3
12 ♜xc3

Now Hoffer suggests 12 bxc3, with the idea 12...b5 13 e4, when 13...b4 'would not affect [White]'.

12 ... b5
13 ♜d2 ♜b6
14 ♜dg1 a5
15 f4 f5! (D)



W

Hoffer considers this position winning for Black; the point is that Chigorin can defuse the pressure on the g-file with the economical ...♜f7 but White has no comparable method of safeguarding his own king. Cvetković and V. Sokolov assess the position as clearly better for Black.

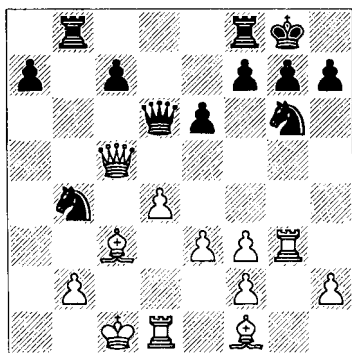
16 ♜g3 a4 17 ♖d1 ♜cb4 18 ♜xb4 ♜xb4 19 ♜hg1 ♜f7 20 ♜b1 a3 21 bxa3 ♜d5 22 ♖b3 b4 23 axb4 ♜xb4 24 ♖d3 c5! 25 dxc5 ♖a5 26 ♜c2 ♖xa2 27 f3 ♜c4 28 ♜1g2 ♜d7 29 c6 ♜xc6 30 ♖d4 ♖a3+ 31 ♜d2 ♜xc2+ 32 ♜xc2 ♜xe3+ 33 ♜b1 ♜xd4 34 ♜xg7+ ♜f8 35 ♜g8+ ♜e7 0-1

This game must surely be considered one of Chigorin's most impressive efforts with the knight pair. Like many of his successes featuring this material distribution, White's task was greatly complicated by concerns over king safety. Somehow, very few of Chigorin's opponents chose to castle into the broken kingside, despite the fact that a later ♜g1-h1 and ♜g1 (and ♜g2 if necessary) might have proven a safer formation for the king.

Burn – Chigorin
Berlin 1897

1 d4 d5 2 c4 ♜c6 3 ♜f3 ♜g4 4 e3 e6 5 ♜c3 ♜b4 6 ♖b3 ♜xf3 7 gxf3 ♜ge7 8 ♜d2 0-0 9 a3 ♜xc3 10 ♜xc3 ♜b8 11 ♜g1 ♜g6 12 0-0-0 ♖d6 13 ♜g3 dxc4 14 ♖xc4 b5 15 ♖c5 b4 16 axb4 ♜xb4 (D)

Another typically interesting Chigorin Defence. Black has opened his lines around the white king but Burn is able to defuse the situation by walking his king toward the



W

kingside. Cvetković and V. Sokolov assess the position as $\bar{+}$.

17 ♙c4 ♜b6

18 ♞dg1 ♞fb8

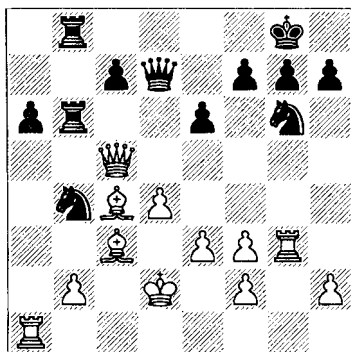
19 ♚d2?

Panov gives 19 ♞xd6 cxd6 20 ♚d2 , intending 21 ♙d3 , 22 ♞a1 and the advance of the h-pawn, as unclear (cited in *MCSG*).

19 ... ♞d7

20 ♞a1 a6 (D)

The immediate 20... ♞c6? loses the exchange after 21 ♙b5 .



W

Now Panov analyses both 21 b3 and 21 ♙xb4 to clear advantages for Black, but 21 ♙e2 seems tenable for White – Mayer.

Instead of this, Burn overlooked Black's threat and soon had to resign: 21 $\text{♙e2?? ♞c6! 22 ♞a7 ♞c8!}$ (a trap closes around White's queen and major material is now lost) 23 $\text{♙xb4 ♞xc4 24 ♙c5 ♞a8 25 ♞xa8 ♞xa8 26 ♙d3 ♚e5+! 27 ♙e2 ♚d7 0-1}$

I've deliberately focused primarily on Chigorin games with two knights versus two bishops, but probably his best known game in the Chigorin Defence featured a bishop and knight against two bishops. However, the ideas he used were similar enough to those used in his efforts with two knights that it seems appropriate to present the following game.

Teichmann – Chigorin

Cambridge Springs 1904

1 $\text{d4 d5 2 c4 ♚c6 3 ♚f3 ♙g4 4 cxd5 ♙xf3 5 dxc6 (D)}$

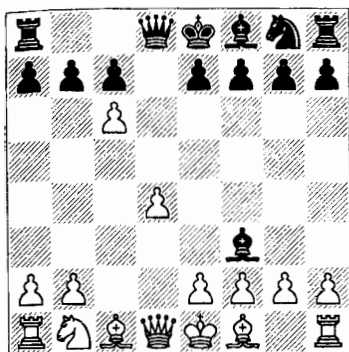
This variation gained in popularity after it became clear that 5 gxf3 doesn't result in a simple advantage for White.

5 ... ♙xc6

6 ♚c3 e6

7 ♙f4

It was later established that 7 $\text{e4 ♙b4 8 f3 f5!? (8... ♞h4+ is the}$



B

modern preference) 9 ♖c4! represents the most dangerous approach.

- | | |
|--------|------|
| 7 ... | ♟f6 |
| 8 e3 | ♜b4 |
| 9 ♖b3 | ♟d5 |
| 10 ♖g3 | 0-0 |
| 11 ♖d3 | ♜g5! |
| 12 ♖c2 | |

White simply loses material after 12 0-0? ♖xc3 13 bxc3 ♟xe3.

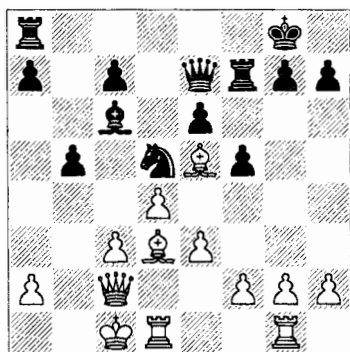
- | | |
|--------|-----|
| 12 ... | f5! |
|--------|-----|

Preparing to harass the g3-bishop with ...f4, while also opening f7 as a defensive post for the king's rook.

- | | |
|----------|------|
| 13 ♖e5 | ♜f7 |
| 14 0-0-0 | ♖xc3 |
| 15 bxc3 | b5! |

The e5-bishop looks impressive, but it's the only white piece of which that can be said. In the meantime, Black has a solid grip on the light squares and is ready to blast open the pawn shelter around White's king with an opportune ...b4.

- | | |
|---------|----------|
| 16 ♜hg1 | ♜e7! (D) |
|---------|----------|



W

The queen prepares to join the attack on White's king. The rest is a massacre: 17 ♜df1 ♖a3+ 18 ♟d2 b4! 19 c4 ♖a4 20 ♖b1 ♟c3 21 ♖a1 ♜d8 22 g3 ♟e4+ 23 ♟e2 ♟c5 24 ♖b1 ♟xd3 25 ♖xd3 ♖xa2+ 26 ♟f3 ♖c2 0-1

No less a player than Botvinnik called attention to Teichmann-Chigorin, although many of Black's ideas had been used by Chigorin as early as the 1890s.

Verdict: The games in this chapter present the 'traditional case for success' of Chigorin's handling of the knight pair against the bishop pair. However, the astute reader has undoubtedly noted by this time that all of these games feature Chigorin's own defence (1 d4 d5 2 c4 ♟c6) or its close relative 1 d4 d5 2 ♟f3 ♖g4. Chigorin's wins in this chapter are impressive efforts and

most of them have become widely anthologized standards in chess literature. Yet it seems to me that these games illustrate Chigorin's success in the handling of the unusual positions that arise out of his defence rather than any intrinsic

success or strategy in the handling of the knights. In particular, the slightly airy position of the white king and the defensive power of the manoeuvre ...f7-f5 and ...♖f8-f7 seems to have played a large part in Chigorin's successes.

4 The Rest of the Story – Chigorin usually lost with the Knight Pair

A database scan of Chigorin's games reveals that he had twenty-four efforts in which he fought with two knights versus two bishops. His record with this material distribution was quite poor; all told, he was $+5 =4 -15$ when he had the knight pair. A percentage of 29% hardly suggests that Chigorin had devised a sound 'rebuttal' to Steinitz's preference for the bishops. It's always possible that my database is incomplete and that I've overlooked a game or two where Chigorin won with the knight pair, but even then, his score with the 'advantage' of the knight pair was probably no higher than 40%.

Several things leap out when one looks at Chigorin's losing efforts with the knights. First, he usually did not give up the bishops to cause pawn weaknesses in his opponent's camp, as, say, Nimzowitsch did. Secondly, he almost never had good squares waiting for his knights when he surrendered the bishops, i.e., there were no important holes or outposts that the

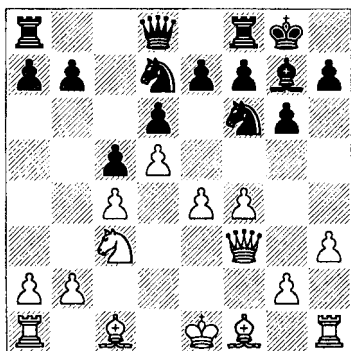
knights could occupy. Finally, in the games that Chigorin lost with the knight pair, he usually had a bad game very quickly, which suggests that many of the games where he 'sought' the knight pair were poorly thought out.

Curiously, he managed to fight back from bad positions in many of these games and often had at least one winning opportunity before ultimately losing. Chigorin may have been in bad form in these games (as evinced by his missing some easy tactical wins), which may also call into question his decision to give up his the bishops for knights.

One final point should be made before we turn to a consideration of Chigorin's losses. The knight pair came to figure in his games relatively late in his career, when he was already in his forties. Claims of any special 'insight' Chigorin may have had as to the value of the knight pair must take this into account, as it is very rare for a major player to make such discoveries so late in his career.

Burn – Chigorin*Vienna 1898*

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 d6 4 ♘c3 g6
 5 e4 ♙g7 6 f4 0-0 7 ♘f3 ♙g4 8 h3
 ♙xf3 9 ♗xf3 ♘bd7 (D)



W

Chigorin's decision to give up his light-squared bishop for the white knight can be seen as an example of 'changing the colour of a bishop' (see Chapter 9). Black's play in the centre is based on the dark squares, so the exchange of the bishop is strategically justified.

10 g4!? e6
 11 dxe6 fxe6
 12 ♙d2 ♘e8?

Unaccountably passive; perhaps Chigorin was concerned about a later e4-e5 or g4-g5. A modern master would probably have played 12...a6, paving the way for a later ...b5. Further, an eventual g4-g5 might be answered in some cases by ...♘h5, which would stop the

advance of the white h-pawn and target the weak f4-pawn.

13 0-0-0 ♗f6?

14 h4

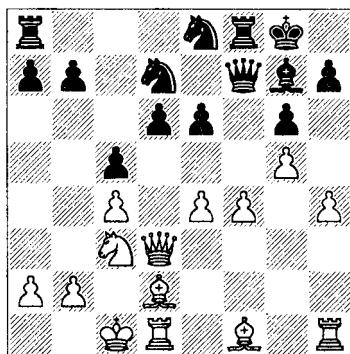
One can understand Burn's decision to play for a straight attack on the king but 14 e5! was also strong, e.g., 14...dxe5 15 ♗xb7 ♙d8 16 ♘e4! ♗f7 17 ♗xa7, threatening 18 ♙a5 +- – Mayer.

14 ... ♗f7

Chigorin could have tried to improve the placing of his queen's knight with 14...♘e5 but White maintains a large advantage by 15 ♗h3 ♘c6 16 h5. Black's attack simply lags behind White's due to his failure to prepare ...b5.

15 ♗d3 ♙h6

16 g5 ♙g7 (D)



W

17 h5!

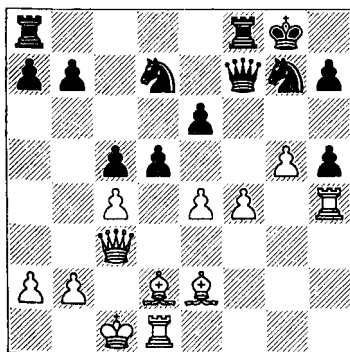
Burn shows good positional judgement in not going after the backward d-pawn, e.g., 17 ♘b5?! e5! 18 ♘xd6 ♘xd6 19 ♗xd6 exf4

20 ♖xf4 ♗xf4 (20...♗e7! is an alternative, as it provides Black with good compensation for the pawn in the form of play on the dark squares) 21 ♖xf4 ♗xf4 22 ♖xd7 ♗af8 and 23...♖4f7, when the superior minor piece and the presence of opposite-coloured bishops gives Black good drawing chances – Mayer.

17 ... **gxh5**
18 ♖e2 **♖xc3!?**

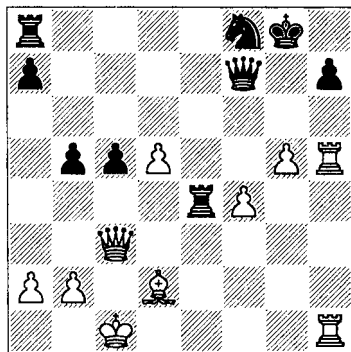
An audacious decision. Chigorin surrenders his remaining bishop with the idea of controlling the h5-square as long as possible. White's rooks will then try to break through on the h-file while Chigorin will create counterplay by opening the centre with ...d5. This plan smacks of desperation but later events will show that it sets White unusual problems.

19 ♖xc3 ♖g7
20 ♖h4 **d5! (D)**



W

21 cxd5 exd5
22 exd5 ♖fe8
23 ♖f3 b5
24 ♖dh1 ♖f8
25 ♖xh5 ♖xh5
26 ♖xh5 ♖e4! (D)



W

27 ♖h3?

The further course of play suggests that both players ended up in severe time pressure, perhaps as early as this phase of the game. The text allows Black to defend successfully, but 27 g6! appears to be very strong:

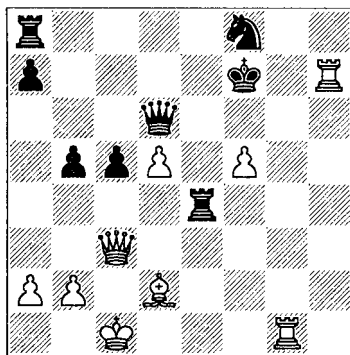
a) 27...♖xg6? 28 ♖xh7 ♖xh7 29 ♖xh7 ♖xh7 30 ♖h3+ ♖g8 31 f5 ♖c4+ 32 ♖b1 (or 32 ♖c3 ♖e5 33 b3! +-) 32...♖e5 (32...♖e7 33 f6! is crushing) 33 ♖g3+ ♖g4 34 ♖f4! +- is a neat line-breaking theme – Mayer.

b) 27...♖xg6 is a tougher nut to crack:

b1) 28 ♖xc5 is possible, when White should win the ending after

28...♖c4+ 29 ♔xc4 bxc4 30 ♖g5 ♗xg5? 31 fxg5 ♙d8 32 ♙h4 ♙xd5 33 ♙xc4 ♘e6 34 ♙a4. However, Black's defence can be improved in this line with the immediate 30...♙d8! 31 ♙hh5 ♘f7 32 ♙xg6 hxg6!, when Black's better king position and centralized pieces make it difficult for White to win – Mayer.

b2) 28 f5! looks strong but I didn't see a cold win after 28...♙d6! 29 ♙g1+ ♘f7, because I thought that White would continue with 30 ♗g7+ ♘e8, e.g., 31 ♗b7 ♙b8 32 ♗xa7 ♙e7!, when Black hits the d-pawn and his queen is ready to go on a checking spree after 33 ♙e1 ♙xe1+ 34 ♙xe1 ♗f4+!. However, Graham Burgess pointed out 30 ♙xh7+! (D), when the black position is cracked.

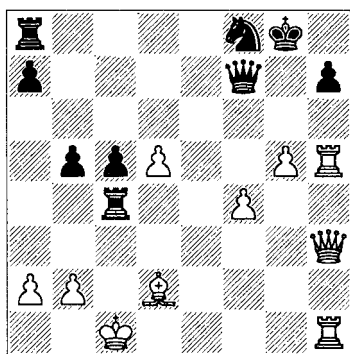


B

For example, 30...♘xh7 31 ♗g7+ ♘e8 32 ♗xh7 or 30...♘e8 31 ♗d3 – Burgess.

It's clear that the position at move 27 is very complicated and it seems likely that Burn rejected 27 g6! on the basis of variation 'b' above (presumably he missed Burgess's 30 ♙xh7+! in line 'b2'). However, the fact remains that Chigorin is now able to stir up complications that are almost favourable to him – and are definitely favourable to him in the event of one more mistake by Burn.

27 ... ♖c4+ (D)



W

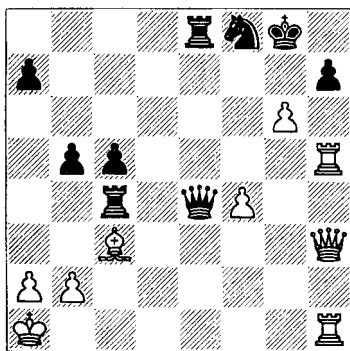
28 ♘b1?

Natural and bad! It's understandable that Burn thought that this was the right move, but he should have braved 28 ♘d1!, with the point that his king is safe from queen checks on the b1-h7 diagonal. Black could then try 28...♙d4 but White gains a superior ending with 29 g6! ♙xd2+ 30 ♘xd2 ♗xf4+ 31 ♗e3! – Mayer.

Other tries instead of 28...♖d4 are possible but the looming g5-g6 looks like a winner with the heavy pieces tripled on the h-file.

28 ... ♖xd5!
29 ♙c3 ♖e8!
30 g6 ♖e4+
31 ♙a1?? (D)

This allows mate in three but 31 ♙c1 ♖xf4+! 32 ♙b1 ♖e4+ and 33...♖xg6 is good for Black, as he has managed to keep his h-pawn in place and has emerged with a material advantage.



B

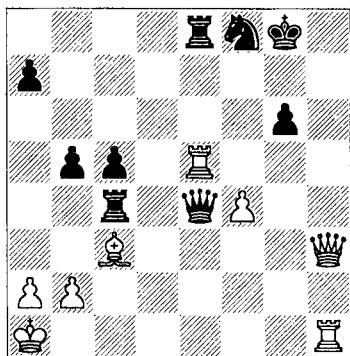
31 ... hxg6??

Proof, in my view, that both players were in extreme time pressure. The mate was to be had by 31...♖e1+!! 32 ♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 33 ♙xe1 ♖c1#.

32 ♖e5? (D)

Burn must have realized that he'd just missed a bullet, so he plays to close the e-file against the back-rank mate. In fact, White

could now have won with the straightforward 32 ♖h8+ ♙f7 33 ♖h7+ ♙xh7 34 ♖d7+! ♖e7 35 ♖xh7+ – Mayer.



B

32 ... ♖xh1+??

Another blunder – the last of the game. Now it was Chigorin's turn to panic in time pressure or he surely would have found 32...♖xe5!, with the possibilities:

a) 33 ♙xe5 ♙f7! 34 ♖h8!, with the division:

a1) 34...♖c2? plays for tactical tricks but allows White to activate his rook, e.g., 35 ♖f6+ ♙e8 36 b3! ♖e4 (36...♖e4 37 ♖d1 is also winning) 37 ♙d6 and the possibility of 38 ♖h8+ should seal Black's fate.

a2) However, after 34...♖d5! Black is clearly better, as he seals the d-file against ♖h1-d1 and ties the white rook to the back rank.

b) White could also try 33 fxe5 but then 33...♖f5! is good for Black – Mayer.

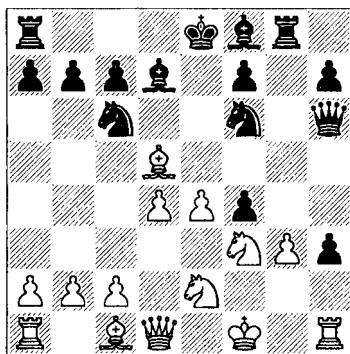
33 ♖xh1 b4
34 ♖d5+ 1-0

Games such as Burn-Chigorin show the gritty nature of nineteenth century chess. Burn handled his initial advantage well but even a modern grandmaster might applaud the deep and practical play begun by Chigorin with the move 18...♗xc3!?.

Sometimes Chigorin found himself in difficult endings as a result of a middlegame decision to exchange his bishops for knights.

Chigorin – Marshall Vienna 1903

1 e4 e5 2 f4 exf4 3 ♗c4 d5 4 ♗xd5 ♖h4+ 5 ♖f1 g5 6 g3 ♖h6 7 ♖c3 ♜f6 8 d4 ♜c6 9 ♖g2 ♗d7 10 h4 ♜g8 11 ♜f3 gxh4 12 ♜e2 h3+ 13 ♜f1 (D)

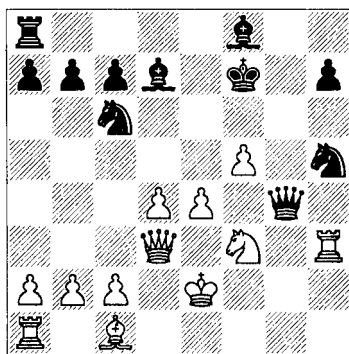


B

13 ... fxg3!!?

An extraordinary sacrifice that nets Black a dangerous attack in return for a queen. Incidentally, the '!!?' symbol was Marshall's personal choice in *Marshall's Best Games of Chess*.

Marshall claims that "it would have been more advantageous for me to play 13...♜h5 14 gxf4 ♜g2! 15 f5 ♖g7 16 ♜xh3 ♖g4, etc." The problem lies in the 'etc.' It looks to me as if Chigorin could then play 17 ♗xf7+!? ♜xf7 18 ♖d3!, with the threat 19 ♜h4. Meanwhile, the white queen guards f3 directly and h3 indirectly (not 18...♖xh3?? 19 ♜g5+), while 18...♜xe2 19 ♜xe2 (D) and now:



B

a) 19...♖g2+? 20 ♜d1 keeps White more than afloat due to the continuing indirect protection of the rook at h3 – Mayer.

b) Graham Burgess suggests 19...♜b4!?, which aims to exploit the clumsy interaction among the

white pieces. After 20 ♖c4+ (20 ♖b3+ ♕e8 is similar, when White should play 21 ♙xh5, because 21 ♙h4? ♖g2+ 22 ♕d1 ♖b5! is good for Black – Burgess) 20...♕e8 21 ♙xh5 ♖xh5! (21...♖g2+? 22 ♕e3! ♕xc2+ 23 ♕f4 is good for White, e.g. 23...♕xa1 24 ♙xh7 wins on the spot – of course 24...0-0-0 is *not* legal!), when White has compensation for his material – Burgess.

It seems as if 13...fxg3!!? might not only be Black's most spectacular move in the position but also his best.

14 ♙xh6

White could also have played 14 ♕xg3 ♖g6 15 ♙g1 (but not 15 ♙f4? ♕h5 –+), which Marshall thinks may have been superior to the text. In the tournament book for Vienna 1903, Marco gives 15 ♙g1, but also offers 15 ♙g5 as a possibility.

14 ... ♖g2+
15 ♕g1 ♙xh6!

Threatening to mate with 16...♙e3+ 17 ♕h2 ♕g4+ 18 ♕xh3 ♕e5+ 19 ♕h4 ♕xf3+ 20 ♕h5 ♙g4# – Marshall.

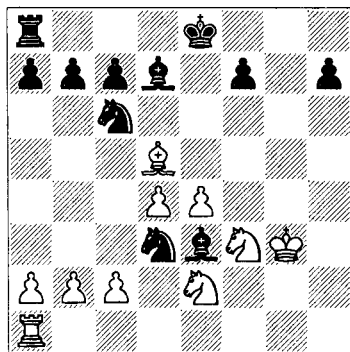
16 ♖d3 ♕g4
17 ♙xh3 ♙e3+
18 ♕xg2

Both Marshall and Marco suggest 18 ♖xe3 ♕xe3, with the former preferring 19 ♙xh7 and the latter giving 19 ♙xc6.

18 ... ♕f2+
19 ♙g3

White is embarrassed after Marshall's 19 ♕h2? ♙xh3!.

19 ... ♙xg3+
20 ♕xg3 ♕xd3 (D)



W

21 cxd3?

Marshall gives 21 ♙xc6 ♙xc6 22 cxd3 as minimizing Black's advantage.

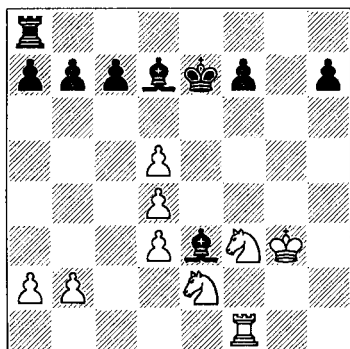
21 ... ♕b4!
22 ♙f1

Black does very well after 22 ♙xb7 ♙b8 23 ♙d5 ♕xd5 24 exd5 ♙xb2, which Marshall assesses as winning for Black.

Another possibility was 22 ♙h1 ♕xd5 23 ♙xh7, with the threat 24 ♙h8+, which both Marco and Marshall analysed for some length (Marshall demonstrated that Black did very well with 23...♕e7). However, their analyses are moot, as both men overlooked the simple 23...♕b6, which guards the a8-rook and wins a piece.

22 ... ♕xd5

23 exd5 ♖e7 (D)



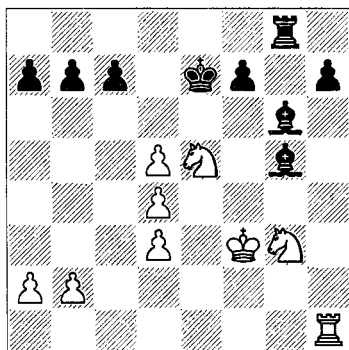
W

Hair-raising complications have resolved themselves into an ending that looks terrific for Black, since he has the bishop pair and White's tripled d-pawns are a real fright. However, Black can't just win the d-pawns and subsequent possibilities suggest that proper defence by White might well have held the balance.

Yet aside from his positional advantage, Black probably had a big psychological advantage here. Chigorin has defended superbly but all that he has earned for his efforts is an ending that he probably wrote off as 'lost'. Thus, while Marshall will continue to play hard – 'I have to win my won game' – there is the risk that Chigorin will slack off and not make the most of his chances.

24 ♖e5 ♜g8+
 25 ♜f3 ♜h3
 26 ♜d1 ♜g5

27 ♜h1 ♜f5
 28 ♜g3 ♜g6 (D)



W

29 ♖e4?

Marshall makes the apt comment "White must remove one of the terrible bishops." Oddly, neither he nor Marco mention that 29 ♖xg6+!, which does remove one of the terrors, is the best move:

a) 29...hxc6? 30 ♖e4 ♜f6 (30...f6 31 ♜h7+ is worse) 31 ♜c1! c6 (31...♜c8? 32 d6+! is the point) 32 dxc6 bxc6 33 ♖xf6! (the immediate 33 ♜xc6? ♜xd4 favours Black) 33...♜xf6 34 ♜xc6+ ♜g7 35 ♜c7 ♜d8 36 ♜xa7 ♜xd4 37 ♜e3 is good for White – Mayer.

b) 29...♜xc6 30 ♜xh7 eliminates the outside passed h-pawn, though the value of White's extra pawn is unclear.

29 ... h6
 30 ♖c5 b6
 31 ♖e4 f6
 32 ♖xg6+

32 ♖c6+ ♜d7 33 ♖xa7 ♜a8 favours Black – Marshall.

32 ... ♜xg6

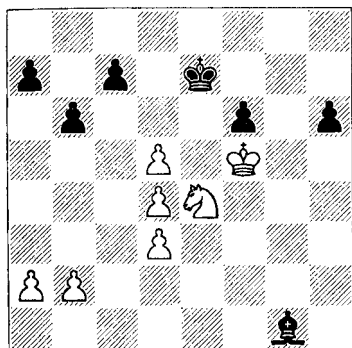
33 ♖g4 ♜e3+

34 ♖f5 ♜g1

35 ♜xg1

Marshall remarks that 35 ♜h3 ♜f1+ 36 ♖g6 ♜g5 is “also in Black’s favour”.

35 ... ♜xg1 (D)



W

36 d6+

Marshall awards this an exclamation mark and claims a win for Black after 36 ♖xf6 ♜xd4 37 ♖g8+ ♜d6:

a) 38 ♖e4 ♜g7! 39 d4 h5 “and White can resign” – Marshall.

b) However, it is silly to leave the h-pawn on the board, which suggests 38 ♖xh6 ♜xd5 39 b3, when White can play with the idea of the limited number of pawns remaining to give himself decent drawing chances – Mayer.

36 ... cxd6

37 ♖xf6 ♜xd4

38 ♖g8+ ♜d7

39 ♖xh6 ♜xb2

40 ♖e4 ♜c6

41 d4 b5

42 ♖f5 b4

43 ♖e7+ ♜d7

44 ♖d5 a5

45 ♖d3 ♜c6

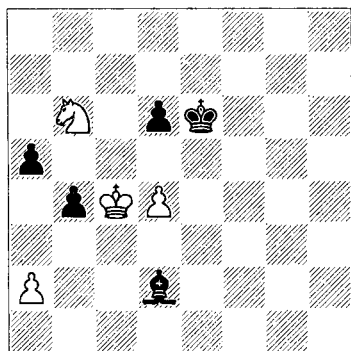
46 ♖c4 ♜c1

47 ♖e7+ ♜d7

“The king must get to e4 to menace the d-pawn.” – Marshall.

48 ♖d5 ♜e6

49 ♖b6 ♜d2 (D)



W

50 ♖d3?

This move passes without comment by either Marshall or Marco. That’s a pity, as I would have liked to know how Black can win after 50 d5+! ♜e5 51 ♖b5! ♜e4 52 ♖c4 ♜c3 53 ♖xa5 ♜xd5 54 ♖c6 = – Mayer.

Note that White’s drawing possibilities are based on the limited

number of pawns and the activity his king and knight can achieve on the light squares, where White has the advantage of an extra piece.

50 ... ♖c3
 51 ♖c4 ♖e1
 52 ♜d5 ♖f5
 53 ♜b6 ♖e4
 54 ♜c8

Marco claims that White could have drawn with 54 ♜d5 but Marshall points out a win for Black with 54...♖h4! 55 ♜c7 ♖f2 56 ♜e6 ♖e3 57 d5 (or 57 ♖b5 ♖d2!) 57...♖d2 –+.

54 ... d5+
 55 ♖c5 a4
 56 ♜d6+ ♖d3
 57 ♜b5 a3

0-1

The excitement and missed opportunities of games such as Burn-Chigorin and Chigorin-Marshall might lead one to say, 'Ah, so Chigorin was on the right track in playing for the knight pair.' The problem with this view is that Chigorin does not appear to have 'played for' the knight pair in these games; he got 'stuck' with the knights as his best chance of defending a pair of really bad positions. (This is especially true in the case of Chigorin-Marshall.) Furthermore, while both sides 'missed opportunities' in these games, Chigorin's opponents missed their opportunities first, i.e., the knights

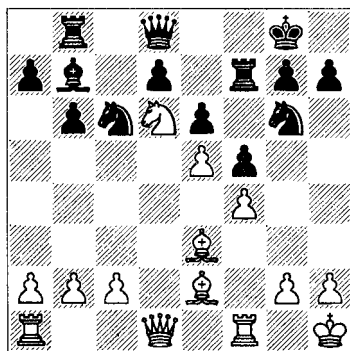
'had their chance' only after the bishops missed theirs.

In any event, an excellent antidote to inappropriate romanticism concerning Chigorin's knights is provided by the rest of the games in the chapter.

Englisch – Chigorin

London 1883

1 e4 c5 2 ♜c3 ♜c6 3 ♜f3 e6 4 ♖e2
 ♜ge7 5 d4 cxd4 6 ♜xd4 ♜g6 7
 0-0 ♖e7 8 ♖e3 0-0 9 f4 ♖c5 10
 ♖h1 ♖xd4 11 ♖xd4 f5 12 ♖c5
 ♜f7 13 e5 b6 14 ♖e3 ♖b7 15 ♜b5
 ♜b8 16 ♜d6 (D)



B

16...♜f8 17 ♜xb7 ♜xb7 18 ♖f3
 ♜e7 19 g3 ♖c7 20 ♜d2 ♜fc8 21 c4
 ♜f8 22 b3 ♜d8 23 ♜fd1 ♜f7 24
 a4 ♜d8 25 a5 bxa5 26 ♜xa5 d6 27
 exd6 ♜xd6 28 ♖xa7 ♜xd1+ 29
 ♖xd1 e5 30 fxe5 ♜xe5 31 ♖d4
 ♜c6 32 ♜d5+ ♖h8 33 ♖c3 ♜e8

34 ♖f3 ♜c8 35 ♞e1 h6 36 ♜d6
 ♜h7 37 ♙d5 ♜g6 38 ♙e6 ♜b7 39
 ♙xf5 ♜e7+ 40 ♙e4 ♜xb3 41 ♜e5
 ♜d5 42 ♙xg6+ ♜xg6 43 ♜e4+
 ♜h5 44 ♜f5+ g5 45 ♜h3+ ♜g6 46
 ♞e6+ ♜f7 47 ♜f5+ ♜g8 48 ♞e8#
 (1-0)

Englisch-Chigorin was an especially disheartening example of just how badly Chigorin could do with the knights. The ‘analysis junkies’ among you are probably disappointed that I’ve given this game without notes but where could they have been inserted? Simply put, ‘Black stunk up the joint’. The knights never created a meaningful threat, the black pawn structure was awful and the black army choked on a lack of space or counterplay.

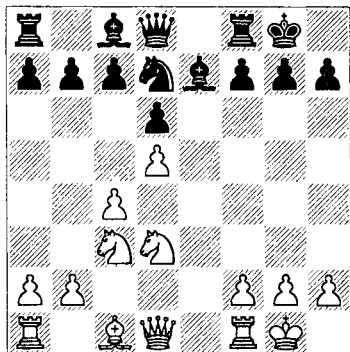
This is undoubtedly the worst of the games examined in this chapter – and one of the worst in the entire book – but it’s not an orphan.

Chigorin – Janowski

Monte Carlo 1901

1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 c3 ♜f6 4 d4
 ♜xe4 5 d5 ♜b8 6 ♙d3 ♜c5 7
 ♜xe5 ♜xd3+ 8 ♜xd3 ♙e7 9 0-0
 0-0 10 c4 d6 11 ♜c3 ♜d7 (D)

Janowski is remembered as a great connoisseur of the bishops, so it seems appropriate that he should have them in this game. White’s problem is that his natural plan is to play to make something



W

of his space advantage on the queenside with the pawn lever c4-c5 but then the white d-pawn is weak. This isn’t a problem in, say, a King’s Indian, as then White would typically have a pawn at e4 to support the d-pawn.

12 ♞e1	♞e8
13 ♙f4	♜b6
14 b3	♙f5
15 ♜d2	♜d7
16 ♞ac1	♜f8
17 ♞e2	♜g6
18 ♙g3	h5!
19 h3	h4
20 ♙h2	♜h7
21 ♞ce1	♙g5!
22 ♜d1	

White loses material after 22 ♞xe8? ♙xd2 –+.

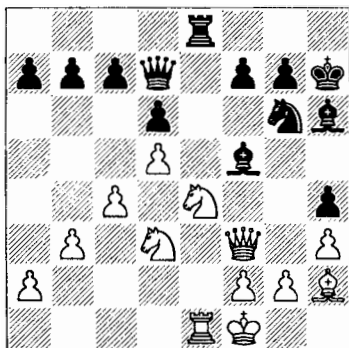
22 ...	♞xe2
23 ♜xe2	♙h6

The white bishop at h2 is a particularly poor piece, because it is ‘biting on granite’ against the pawn chain c7-d6. The advance c4-c5,

designed to liberate it, would still serve primarily to weaken White's d-pawn.

24 ♖e4 ♖d7
25 ♗f3 ♗e8
26 ♖f1?! (D)

An odd move. It's understandable that Chigorin has no interest in the 'tactics' of 26 ♖f6+? gxf6 27 ♖xe8, as both 27...♗xd3 and 27...♗xe8 28 ♗xf5 ♗e2! are clearly better for Black. Still, it can't help matters much to bring the king toward the centre in a situation where the centre isn't thoroughly closed.



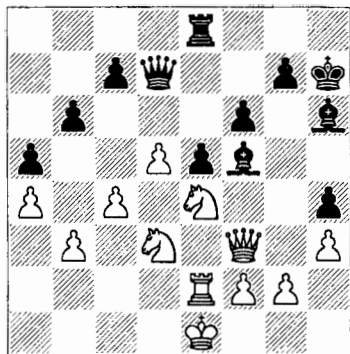
B

26 ... a5
27 a4

Chigorin prevents a later ...a5-a4 but the white pawns are now a major target in any endgames, as they are fixed on the colour of the light-squared bishop.

27 ... b6
28 ♖e2 f6

29 ♖e1 ♖e5
30 ♗xe5 dxe5 (D)

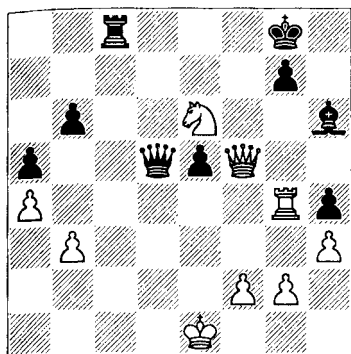


W

31 c5?

For better or worse, Chigorin had to play for a kingside attack with 31 ♗h5!? ♗xe4 32 ♖xe4 c6 (32...g5 33 f4! carves out play on the kingside and on the light squares) 33 ♖f4! ♖d8 34 ♗g6+ ♖g8! (this pins the g-pawn but it also ensures that captures at h6 don't occur with check) 35 ♖e6 (35 ♖h5!? is worth a look but how does White make progress against 35...♗g5, which guards f6 and h4?) 35...cxd5 36 cxd5 ♖c8 37 ♖g4 (37 ♖xh4 ♗xd5 is very good for Black) 37...f5! 38 ♗xf5 ♗xd5 (D), when it appears that White can hold the balance:

a) 39 ♖d4 ♗xb3 (39...♗xg2 40 ♖c4! – Burgess, allows the rook to find a safe square with gain of tempo; then 40...♖xc4 41 ♗f8+ ♖h7 42 ♗f5+ leads to a perpetual check on the light squares) 40



W

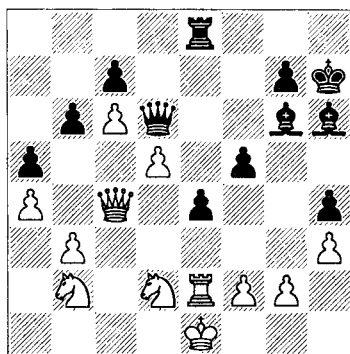
♖xe5 ♖a2 leaves Black for choice – Mayer.

b) 39 ♜d4 ♜c1+ (39... ♜d8 may keep a slight edge for Black – Burgess) 40 ♜e2 ♖c5!, and now not 41 ♜e6? ♖d6 when Black wins (Mayer), but 41 ♖e6+, when White has at least a perpetual check – Burgess.

Variations such as these always remind me of Larsen's epigram 'Long variation, wrong variation'. It's certainly true that an analyst will often miss things in his study that two people playing a game of chess will find. However, 31 c5? is worse than useless, as now the d-pawn is fatally weak and the black pieces soon get their shot at the white king without having to worry about any distracting counterplay.

- | | |
|--------|-----|
| 31 ... | ♜g6 |
| 32 c6 | ♖e7 |
| 33 ♜b2 | f5! |
| 34 ♜d2 | ♖c5 |
| 35 ♖d3 | e4 |

36 ♖c4 ♖d6 (D)



W

37 ♜d1

Trying to make room for the rook with 37 ♜f1 is answered by 37... ♜f7 and the d-pawn drops. Notice how strong the black bishops have become, while the white knights have been steadily restricted and pushed back by the advancing black kingside majority.

37 ... ♜h5

38 ♜f1

White loses after 38 f3 ♖g3+ 39 ♜f1 to both 39...exf3 and the even stronger 39...e3! 40 ♜b1 ♖h2 +.

38 ... ♜xe2

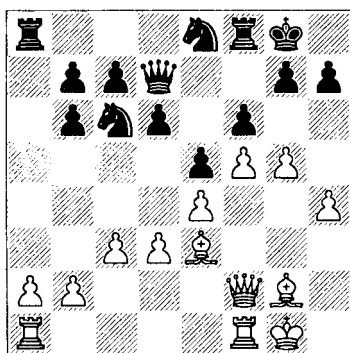
0-1

Mieses – Chigorin

Karlsbad 1907

- | | | | | | |
|--------|------|-------|------|---------|-----|
| 1 e4 | e5 | 2 ♜c3 | ♜c6 | 3 g3 | ♜f6 |
| 4 ♜g2 | ♜c5 | 5 d3 | d6 | 6 ♜a4 | ♜b6 |
| 7 ♜xb6 | axb6 | 8 ♜e2 | ♜g4 | 9 f3 | ♜e6 |
| 10 f4 | ♜g4 | 11 h3 | ♜xe2 | 12 ♖xe2 | |

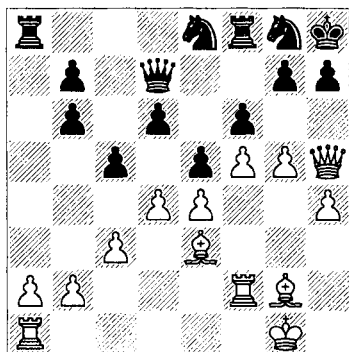
♟d4 13 ♖f2 ♗d7 14 ♙e3 ♘e6?
 (better is the immediate 14...♘c6)
 15 0-0 0-0 16 f5 ♘d8? (what's
 wrong with 16...♘c5?) 17 g4 ♘e8
 18 g5 f6 19 h4 ♘c6 20 c3 (D)



B

Chigorin has played the opening in miserable fashion. Not only does White have the bishop pair against knights that have no good squares, but he also has a large space advantage on the kingside and chances of opening the centre with a later d3-d4. The pawn structure on the kingside recalls a King's Indian Attack. Chigorin played this opening quite well from the white side but as his play in this game demonstrates, he was as clueless as his contemporaries when it came to playing the black side.

20 ... ♘e7
 21 ♖f3 ♙h8
 22 ♖h5 ♘g8
 23 ♙f2 c5
 24 d4 (D)



B

24 ... ♘c7
 25 ♙d2 ♖e7
 26 ♙ad1 ♙fd8

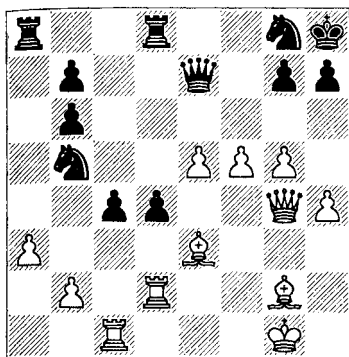
White has built up an impressive strike force on the d-file, as is shown by the variation 26...exd4 27 cxd4 ♙xa2 28 dxc5 dxc5 (28...bxc5 29 ♙xd6 also favours White) 29 ♙d7 ♖e5 30 g6 h6 31 ♙xg7!, with a mating attack – Mayer.

27 ♖g4 ♘b5
 28 a3 exd4
 29 cxd4 c4

It may have been better to eliminate one of the bishops by means of 29...cxd4 30 ♙xd4 ♘xd4. However, Black has the problem that his b-pawns are very weak, so the endings should be winning for White. Further, any ending is likely to occur on an open board with pawns on both sides, so White's bishop(s) would have a field day.

30 ♙c1 d5
 31 e5 fxe5
 32 dxe5 d4!? (D)

Chigorin tries for tactical complications. These should favour White, but his decision is understandable in view of 32...♖xe5 33 ♙xb6, with a solid edge for White.



W

33 f6!?

Mieses was known as an attacking player, so he has no qualms in mixing it up from a superior position. It seems simpler to play 33 ♙xd4 ♘xd4 34 ♖xd4 ♖xe5 35 ♖cxc4, when White's advantage must be close to winning.

33 ... gxf6

Black is in difficulties after 33...♖xe5 34 ♙f4 ♖c5 35 fxg7+ ♗xg7 36 b4!, gaining control of the e5-square for a bishop check – Mayer.

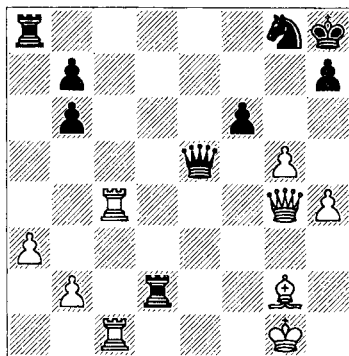
34 ♙xd4 ♘xd4

35 ♖xd4 ♖xe5

36 ♖dxc4 ♖d2! (D)

Chigorin realizes that his best chance of defence lays in centralization and activity. Pawn grabbing

with 36...♖xb2? is soon disposed of by 37 ♖c7 ♖d2 38 ♖xh7+! ♗xh7 39 ♖c7+ and White's mating attack arrives first – Mayer.



W

It should be noted that while Black has succeeded in eliminating one of White's bishops, the other will play a major role in the rest of the game. Meanwhile, the black knight is doing little more than serving as the sole defender near the black king.

37 g6

hgx6

38 ♖xg6

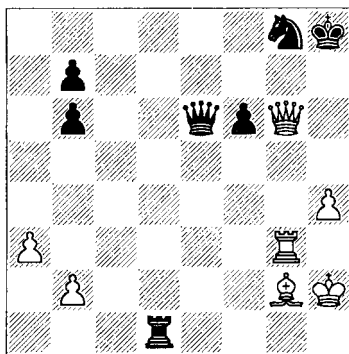
♖ad8?

Chigorin could have rounded off his defensive strategy with 38...♖c8!, with the point that 39 ♖xc8 ♖d4+ gives him a perpetual check on the dark squares. White isn't obliged to capture the rook but then a single Black rook serves to tie down both White rooks, so Black's defensive chances are improved greatly – Mayer.

39 ♖e4?

This game reminds me of Burn-Chigorin, which we saw earlier in the chapter. In both cases, Chigorin's opponent mistakenly chose to challenge a heavy piece on an open centre file rather than to pursue his own attack.

Instead, Mieses could have set Black insoluble problems with 39 ♖g4! ♜d1+ 40 ♜xd1 ♜xd1+ 41 ♙f1 ♞e3+ 42 ♙h2 ♞f2+ 43 ♙g2 ♞g1+ 44 ♙h3 ♞e3+ 45 ♜g3 ♞e6+ 46 ♙h2 (D).



B

Now the safer king position wins, e.g., 46...♜d7 47 ♙e4! +–, when a defence based on exchanging loses after 47...♞f7 48 ♞xf7 ♜xf7 49 ♙d5, followed by mass exchanges at g7/g8, as the outside passed pawn decides for White. Similarly, direct attack fails after 47...♜d2+ 48 ♙g1 ♜d1+ 49 ♙f2 ♜d2+ 50 ♙e1 +– and the white king sends 'kindest regards' to his colleague at h8 – Mayer.

39 ... ♜d1+
40 ♙f1? ♞b5?

The continuing mistakes suggest time-pressure. Black is better after the simple 40...♞xe4 41 ♞xe4 ♜xc1, as the bishop at f1 can't escape from the plan of doubling on the eighth rank.

41 ♜cc4 ♞d7
42 ♞h5+ ♞h7
43 ♞f3

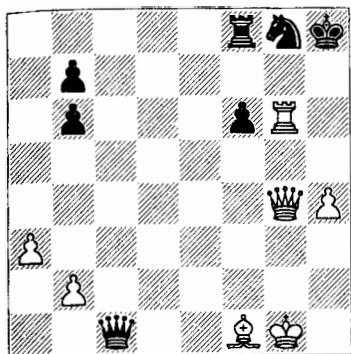
Mieses really must have wanted to win by direct attack; the ending after 43 ♞xh7+ ♙xh7 44 ♜c7+ should be winning for White, because all the black pawns are weak and White's pieces are far more active.

43 ... ♜1d7
44 ♜g4 ♜g7
45 ♜xg7 ♞xg7+
46 ♜g4 ♞h6
47 ♞e4 ♜f8
48 ♜g6 ♞c1
49 ♞g4 (D)

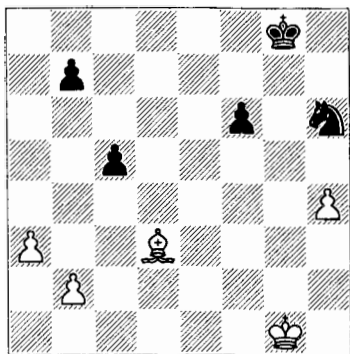
Here 49 ♞xb7 looks very good for White, as it wins a pawn and threatens mate. Mieses's disdain for grabbing material in this game suggests that he assumed that the weak black pawns 'wouldn't run away'.

49 ... ♙h6
50 ♞h5 ♙h7
51 ♜g3 ♞c5+
52 ♞xc5 bxc5
53 ♙d3+?!

Still playing for attack! It seems simpler to play 53 ♙g2 b6 54 ♜b3



B



W

♖b8 55 a4 +-. Note that the g2-bishop serves to restrict not only the rook – Black can never play ...**♖a8** – but also the knight, i.e., 55...**♗f5?** 56 **♕e4** wins a piece.

53 ... **♖h8**
54 **♗g6** **♗g8**
55 **♖xg8+** **♖xg8 (D)**

But in the end, it really doesn't matter, as White has reached a winning ending: his pieces are more active and he has an outside passed pawn that will tie down at least one black piece. The rest requires no comment: 56 **♖g2 ♖f7 57 ♖f3 ♖e6 58 ♖f4 ♖d5 59 ♕e4+ ♖c4 60**

♕xb7 ♖b3 61 ♕d5+ c4 62 h5 ♖xb2 63 a4 c3 64 ♕e4 f5 65 ♕d3 ♖c1 66 ♖e3 ♗g4+ 67 ♖d4 f4 68 ♖xc3 1-0

Verdict: Neither Chigorin's record with two knights vs two bishops nor the aesthetic quality of the respective games suggest that he had worked out any systematic method of playing with knights against bishops. The onus is now on historians and researchers to provide any proof that Chigorin – or any of his major contemporaries – claimed that he had.

5 The Problem Knight

Minor pieces are particularly prone to ending up in passive situations. This is not at all uncommon; indeed, the minor pieces *start* the game in passive positions. However, once the middlegame is reached, one really does expect to have reasonably active minor pieces. They occasionally need to be repositioned as the pawn structure changes, but it is typically feasible to find an active post for a minor piece that has strayed into passivity.

Unfortunately, there are times when a knight or bishop becomes irrevocably passive. I call such poor unfortunates Problem Pieces. In this chapter, we examine Problem Knights, while the next chapter will feature the Problem Bishop.

Not surprisingly, a knight on the rim can end up as a Problem Knight. The following game is a particularly striking example.

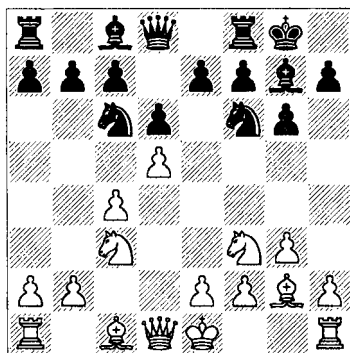
Botvinnik – Geller

USSR Ch (Moscow) 1952

1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 ♙g7 4 ♙g2 0-0 5 ♟c3 d6 6 ♟f3 ♟c6 7 d5 (D)

It was discovered later that this move-order is slightly inaccurate

compared to 7 0-0 a6 8 d5 ♟a5 9 ♟d2 c5, etc.



B

7 ... ♟a5
8 ♟d2 c5

Geller is also inaccurate, because 8...c6! opens the c-file and usually allows the knight to play to c4 later.

Instead, Geller chooses to play 8...c5, which is a standard transposition from the Panno Variation to the Yugoslav Variation. While it is an accepted part of opening theory, it is critical for Black to remember that the a5-knight is poorly placed *strategically* and only vigorous play and *tactics* can justify its placement.

9 ♙c2 a6

10 0-0 ♖f5

White has more space in the centre, so it's a mistake to provoke the advance e2-e4, which he would have played momentarily in any event. Preferable is 10...♖b8 and 11...b5.

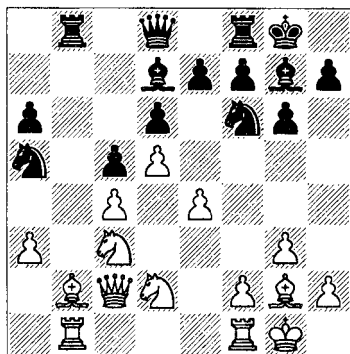
It's now time to elaborate on Black's knight on a5. In the given pawn structure, it is certainly badly placed. Black needs to *change* the pawn structure to justify the knight's placement on the rim. This can be done by advancing the b-pawn, which serves to undermine the white centre. By spending two tempi (...♖f5 and ...♖d7) before making this advance, Geller gives Botvinnik extra time to consolidate his space advantage, after which the a5-knight really is a Problem Knight.

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| 11 e4 | ♖d7 |
| 12 b3 | b5 |
| 13 ♖b2 | bxc4 |
| 14 bxc4 | ♖b8 |
| 15 ♖ab1 | ♖b4 |
| 16 a3 | ♖b8?(D) |

Geller lets slip his chance for any kind of fun. In *Botvinnik's Best Games 1947-1970*, Botvinnik suggests 16...♖xc4 17 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 18 ♖c1 as better. Black's knight is then active and his queenside play should not be underestimated.

After the text, Botvinnik does a masterful job of locking out the knight.

- 17 ♖d1!



W

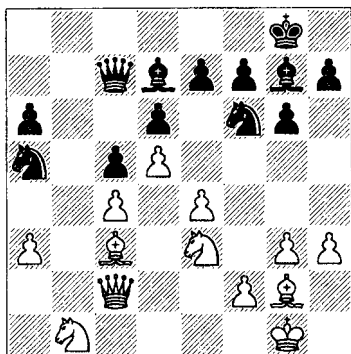
White's knight heads for e3, where it will overprotect the important c4-pawn and will also have chances of leaping into an attack on the kingside.

Black's problem is that he has nothing to look forward to: White has more space and can continue to gain space with an eventual f2-f4 and e4-e5, while the knight at a5 has little chance for activity and may even get trapped under some circumstances.

- | | |
|-------------|-------|
| 17 ... | ♖c7 |
| 18 ♖e3 | ♖b7 |
| 19 ♖c3 | ♖fb8 |
| 20 h3 | ♖xb1 |
| 21 ♖xb1 | ♖xb1+ |
| 22 ♖xb1 (D) | |

Botvinnik's piece arrangement ensures that the a5-knight remains a spectator. Inferior was 22 ♖xb1 ♖a4, when the knight might later play into b3.

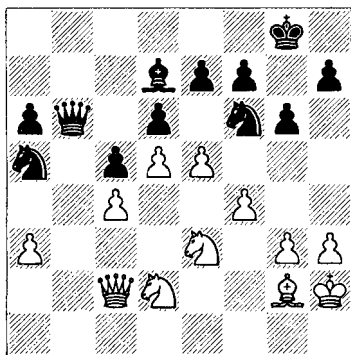
Botvinnik suggests that Black's only chance from here on "was to



B

play ...e5 at the appropriate moment so as to slow down the development of White's breakthrough."

- | | |
|-----------|------|
| 22 ... | ♖b6 |
| 23 ♘d2 | ♙e8 |
| 24 ♙xg7 | ♘xg7 |
| 25 ♖h2 | ♙e8 |
| 26 f4 | ♘f6 |
| 27 e5 (D) | |



B

The position is now a technical win, as there is no good method of stopping White's looming kingside

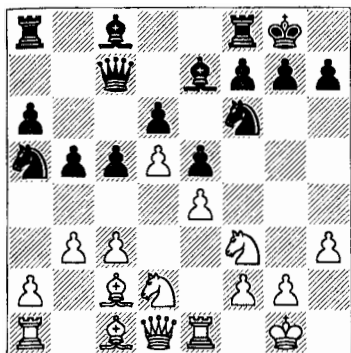
attack: 27... ♙e8 28 ♖c3 f6 29 e6 ♙a4 30 ♙e4 ♘g7 (White wins a piece after 30... ♘b3 31 ♖b2 ♖a5 32 ♘xb3 ♖b6 {32... ♖e1 33 ♖d2} 33 ♙c2 – Botvinnik) 31 ♙d3 ♘h5 32 ♙e2 ♘g7 33 h4 ♙e8 34 ♙d3 ♘g7 35 f5 ♘b3 (“This loses a piece, but it makes no real difference.” – Botvinnik) 36 ♖b2 ♖a5 37 ♘xb3 ♖e1 38 ♘g2 ♖d1 39 ♘c1 gxf5 40 ♙e2 ♖d4 41 ♖xd4 1-0

This proved to be Botvinnik's sole win from Geller. Excluding draws, Geller won their lifetime series 4-1.

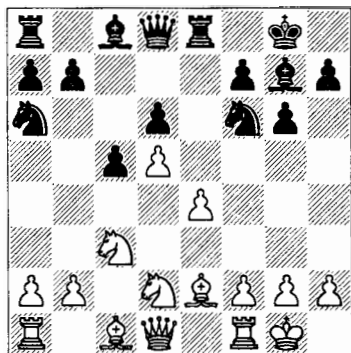
Of course, the Panno/Yugoslav is playable, but the failure to justify the inferior placement of his knight is comparable to Black's failure to justify his bad queen's bishop in a French Defence.

Another accepted approach in which Black takes on a Problem Knight at a5 is in certain lines of the Chigorin Variation of the Ruy Lopez, i.e., 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♙e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♙b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♘a5 10 ♙c2 c5 11 d4 ♖c7 12 ♘bd2 ♘c6 13 d5 ♘a5 14 b3 (D)

Now if Black is fortunate, he will be able to activate his knight through c4 or possibly by ...c4, ...♘b7 and ...♘c5. If he fails to do so, he will face many of the same problems as we saw in Botvinnik-Geller.



B



W

Black's queen's knight can also become a Problem Knight in certain lines of the Modern Benoni. In the following game, Black does a good job of solving the problem, but then goes astray and is outplayed in the tactical complications.

Ivanchuk – Manor

*Groningen, European Junior Ch
1986*

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 ♘f3 g6 4 ♘c3
♙g7 5 d5 0-0 e4 d6 7 ♙e2 e6 8 0-0
exd5 9 cxd5 ♚e8 10 ♘d2 ♘a6 (D)

Black's queen's knight heads for c7, where it will aid his queenside pawn majority in advancing. The drawback to this approach is that the knight will have few active possibilities from c7; in theory, it may eventually reach the juicy square at d4 via b5, but White would have to play very inaccurately for that to happen.

11 f3

There was a time when White would play 11 f4 in this position, but the text is now considered more logical, as it overprotects the key e4-square and frees White's c3-knight to take at b5 if necessary.

11 ... ♘c7

12 a4 b6

13 ♘c4 ♙a6

Black's queen's bishop has few active possibilities, so Manor prepares to exchange it for Ivanchuk's well-placed knight at c4.

14 ♙g5 h6

15 ♙e3 ♙xc4

16 ♙xc4 a6

17 ♚d2 ♙h7

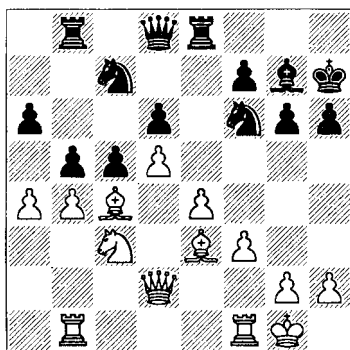
18 ♚ab1 ♚b8

19 b4

In *Informator* 43, Ivanchuk recommends 19 ♚d3!? b5 20 axb5 axb5 21 ♙xb5 ♘xb5 22 ♘xb5 ♘xd5 23 ♚xd5 (23 exd5 ♚d7! is clearly better for Black – Ivanchuk) 23...♚xb5 24 ♚xf7 ±.

The text is intended to leave the black knight at c7 without any good squares. Black succeeds in advancing his queenside pawns and is even able to create a protected passed pawn, but his queen's knight will continue to be a Problem Piece. Interestingly, Ivanchuk marks 19 b4 as '?!'.

19 ... b5 (D)



W

20 ♖e2

This is the first new move of the game. Earlier efforts had seen the alternative 20 axb5, but it is in White's best interests to keep the queenside closed, because that makes it more difficult for Black to queen his c-pawn.

20 ... c4

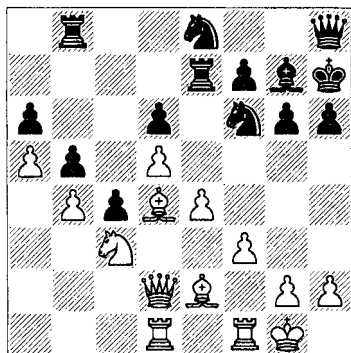
21 ♖d4 ♗e7!

22 a5 ♜h8!

Manor's play in this game is impressive. Ivanchuk has succeeded in leaving the black queen's knight with no active possibilities, but by

skilful manoeuvring, Manor is able to improve the knight's placement.

23 ♜bd1 ♖ce8! (D)



W

It's taken some work, but Manor has succeeded in rearranging his knights so that they each have a good square. Now the black king's knight can play to d7, which will free the f6-square for the queen's knight.

24 ♜fe1 ♖d7

25 ♖xg7 ♖xg7

26 f4 f5

27 ♖f3 ♜be8?

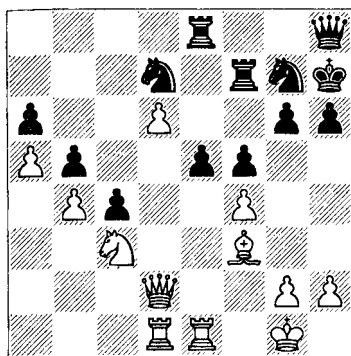
Manor maintains the central tension a tad too long. Ivanchuk gives 27...fxe4! as superior, when he assesses both 28 ♖xe4 ♜be8 29 ♜c2 ♖f5 and 28 ♖xe4 ♜f8! as \mp .

28 e5! dxe5

29 d6 ♜f7 (D)

White also wins after 29...♜e6 30 ♖d5! ♜xd6 (or 30...♜f6 31 ♖c6 +-) 31 ♖g8+ +- – Ivanchuk.

30 ♖b7!



W

‘+–’ – Ivanchuk. Black must deal with the passed d-pawn, but he also faces the problem that his fixed queenside pawns will be removed one after another by White.

30 ... exf4

Ivanchuk also considers the line 30...♟e6!? 31 fxe5! ♞xe5 32 ♙xa6 ♞d3 33 ♙xb5 ♜d4+, and now instead of Ivanchuk’s 34 ♙h1, 34 ♜e3! is clearly winning, as White offers a queen swap and hits the rook at e8 – Mayer.

31 ♙xa6 ♜e3

32 ♜xe3 fxe3

33 ♜xe3 f4

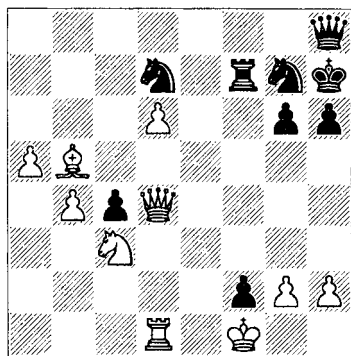
34 ♜d4 f3

35 ♙xb5!

Ivanchuk just goes ahead and takes everything that isn’t nailed down. After 35 gxf3 ♜a8! 36 ♙xb5 ♜xf3, Ivanchuk assesses the position as unclear, although I suspect that White’s fleet of passed pawns still leaves him very much for choice.

35 ... f2+

36 ♙f1 (D)



B

36 ... ♟f6

Or 36...♟f5 37 ♜xh8+ ♙xh8 38 ♙xf2 ♞xd6+ 39 ♙g1 – Ivanchuk, when the connected passed pawns carry the day for White.

37 d7! ♜d8

It’s too late for pyrotechnics, for example, 37...♟e6!? 38 ♜e5! ♞g4 39 ♜xe6! ♞xh2+ 40 ♙e2 f1♜+ 41 ♜xf1 ♜xf1 42 ♜e7+ with a winning position for White – Ivanchuk.

38 ♜xf2 ♟f5

39 ♜b6! ♟e3+

40 ♙g1 ♜a8

Ivanchuk queries this and indicates that it was a result of time pressure. However, White still wins easily even after the nominally better 40...♜xb6 41 axb6 ♞xd1 42 d8♜ ♞xc3 43 ♙xc4 ♞fd5 44 h3 – Ivanchuk.

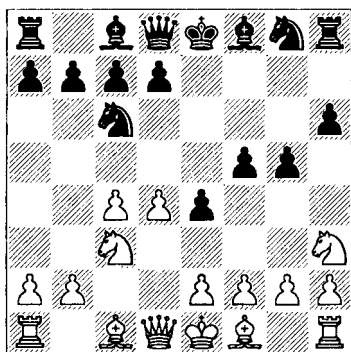
41 ♜xe3 1-0

In the previous two games, the Problem Knight arose deliberately in exchange for other possibilities. It's also possible for the Problem Knight to arise almost by accident, as the following game shows.

Lucena – Browne

Brasilia 1981

1 c4 e5 2 ♖c3 ♘c6 3 ♘f3 f5 4 d4 e4 5 ♘g5 h6 6 ♘h3 g5 (D)



W

White has played a provocative opening in which he hopes that the black kingside pawns will prove overextended. On the downside, his king's knight has ended up off-side in the process and getting it back into play is difficult.

7 e3

It's probably best to play the immediate 7 ♘g1, followed by 8 h4. If then Black pushes ...g4, the white knight can find a good

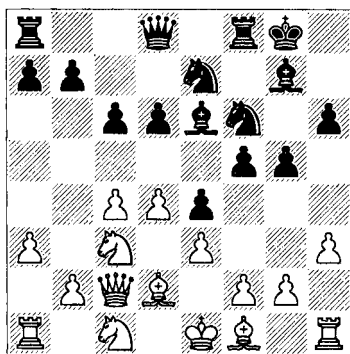
square at f4, while if the pawn stays put at g5, then White chops and the square g5 is weakened.

7 ... ♘f6
8 a3 d6
9 ♘g1 ♗g7
10 ♖c2 0-0
11 h3

Lucena finally brought his knight back to g1 anyhow, but he can't bring himself to play 11 h4. The text may allow White to play g2-g4 in some cases, but in the game it just never happens.

White hasn't solved the problem of his king's knight. It's true that it's back from the rim, but in the meantime, Black has gained so much space on the kingside that it is difficult for White to find an active square for the knight.

11 ... ♘e7
12 ♗d2 c6
13 ♘ge2 ♗e6
14 ♘c1 (D)



B

A continuing side-effect of the knight's original poor placement. It's extraordinary that six tempi have been spent bringing the knight to c1.

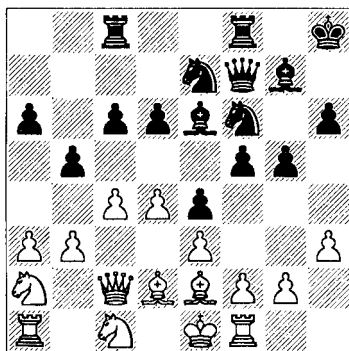
14 ... ♖e8
15 ♙e2 ♖f7
16 ♖f1

Lucena doesn't dare castle kingside, as Browne has a ready-made attack there with ...f4. Still, f2 requires protection, so the rook slides over to f1.

16 ... ♖ac8
17 ♖a4 a6
18 ♖c2

Another two moves are expended in vain (♖c2-a4-c2).

18 ... ♙h8
19 b3 b5
20 ♘3a2 (D)



B

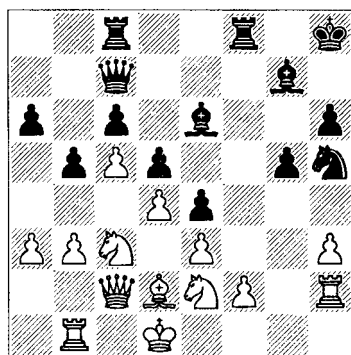
The white knights have to be among the more pathetic in chess history. If this game doesn't convince the reader that not all closed

positions are favourable for knights, then I don't know what will.

20 ... ♘g6
21 ♖b1 f4
22 ♘c3 ♘h4
23 ♖g1 ♘xg2+

Black also keeps a nice advantage after 23...f3.

24 ♖xg2 f3
25 ♖h2 fxe2
26 ♘1xe2 d5
27 c5 ♘h5
28 ♙d1 ♖c7 (D)



W

Now Black crashes through on the kingside and wins a couple of pawns. The rest is given for the record:

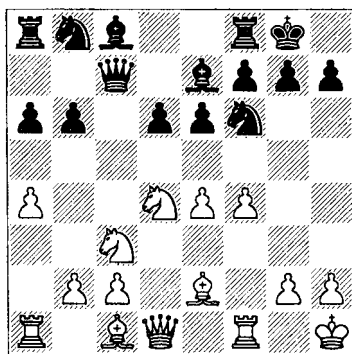
29 ♖h1 ♖xf2 30 ♙c1 ♖h2 31 ♙b2 ♖xh3 32 ♖xh3 ♙xh3 33 ♖h1 ♙g4 34 ♖d1 ♘g3 35 ♖g1 ♘xe2 36 ♘xe2 ♙xe2 37 ♖xe2 ♖f8 38 ♖f1 ♖xf1 39 ♖xf1 ♖d7 40 ♙c3 ♙h7 41 ♙b4 ♙g6 42 ♙a5 ♖c8 43 ♙b6 ♙f6 44 ♙a7 h5 45 ♙a5 h4 46 ♙e1 h3 47 ♙g3 ♖g4 48 ♙h2

♖f3 49 ♖g1 g4 50 ♠g3 ♖g2 51
 ♖xg2 hxg2 52 ♠f2 ♠h4 53 ♠g1
 ♠e1 54 ♠xa6 g3 0-1

Sometimes a Problem Knight arises when a knight is poorly placed and rather than its situation improving, it worsens. The following game is a good example.

Geller – Mikhalchishin
USSR Ch (Tbilisi) 1978

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♠e2 e6 7
 0-0 ♠e7 8 f4 0-0 9 ♠h1 ♖c7 10 a4
 b6?! (D)



W

This move is an inaccuracy for a variety of reasons. Superior was 10...♘c6.

11 ♠f3 ♠b7
 12 e5! ♘e8

The weakness of d6 forces this move if Black wishes to avoid the line-opening 12...dxe5. However,

now the knight at e8 is out of play and will have difficulty getting back into the game. The manoeuvre ...g6 and ...♘g7 is the most likely future for the knight, but it is also time consuming and weakening.

I think it would be premature to say that the knight at e8 is a Problem Knight. However, it is clearly on the verge of becoming one and Black must be careful that it has a future ahead of it.

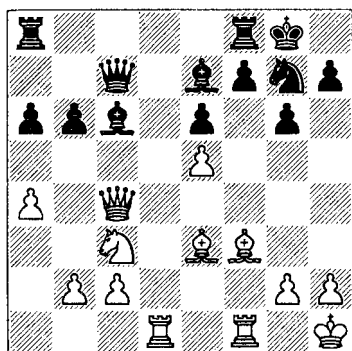
13 ♠e3 ♘c6
 14 ♖e2 g6
 15 ♖ad1 dxe5?!

This is quite bad. Mikhalchishin probably wanted to make sure that White's e-pawn would provide a target for later counterplay, but now e4 remains available for the white knight and f6 becomes a hole on an open file. Instead, 15...♘xd4 16 ♠xd4 ♠xf3 and 17...d5 would have left the position closed and perhaps Black would have had time to organize a defence.

16 fxe5 ♘g7
 17 ♘xc6! ♠xc6
 18 ♖c4! (D)

There's an old saying concerning the Sicilian: 'White wins the middlegames; Black wins the endgames.' Here Geller is eager to liquidate into an ending, because he has a plan for dominating the knight and breaking into the black position.

18 ... ♖fc8

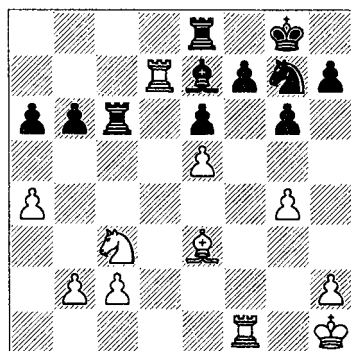


B

This leaves f7 exposed, but the queen's rook must guard the a-pawn.

- | | | |
|----|---------|------|
| 19 | ♙xc6 | ♚xc6 |
| 20 | ♚xc6 | ♙xc6 |
| 21 | ♙d7 | ♙e8 |
| 22 | g4! (D) | |

And that's it: Mikhalchishin could already start packing his belongings, as his knight will never be able to do anything useful. The game concluded: **22...h5 23 h3 hxg4 24 hxg4 b5 25 axb5 axb5 26**



B

♙e4 ♙xc2 27 ♙f6+ ♙xf6 28 exf6 ♙xb2 29 fxg7 f5 30 ♙f3 fxg4 31 ♙f4 ♙c8 32 ♙c5 1-0

Verdict: Problem Knights can arise whenever a knight gets moored on the edge of the board. Its owner should be alert to solving the problem if he can. Attention should also be paid to improving the position of poorly placed knights that are on their way to becoming Problem Knights.

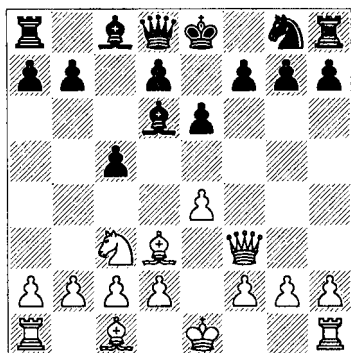
6 The Problem Bishop

Problem Bishops arise less frequently than Problem Knights. I think this is a reflection of the way the two pieces move. A knight, after all, has its movements restricted toward the side of the board. A bishop does also, of course, but it continues to reach a lot of squares. Further, the bishop can usually reach two diagonals; coupled with its rapid movement, this usually allows the bishop to escape from the fate of Problem Piece. However, this is not always possible, as we shall see in this chapter. When a bishop does end up as a problem piece, it's nearly always on or toward the side of the board.

Incidentally, I think a distinction is useful between Problem Bishop and Bad Bishop. A Bad Bishop may or may not be a 'Problem', while a Problem Bishop can be, technically speaking, the Good Bishop – there are good 'bad' bishops and bad 'good' bishops. However, this chapter should be read in conjunction with the chapter on bad bishops, as this will afford the reader the broadest insight into bishops that encounter troubles as they go about their normal business.

Bronstein – A. Zaitsev
Berlin 1968

1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 e6 3 ♖f3 ♘c6 4 ♙b5 ♘d4 5 ♙d3!? ♖xf3+ 6 ♚xf3 ♙d6?! (D)



W

In *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, Bronstein allows this move to pass without meaningful comment, but it strikes me as a definite mistake. It's unclear what Zaitsev hoped to accomplish; perhaps he wanted to show that he could match Bronstein in 'eccentricity'. In any event, the immediate 6...e5 was more reasonable, as was the flexible 6...d6.

7 ♚e3! e5

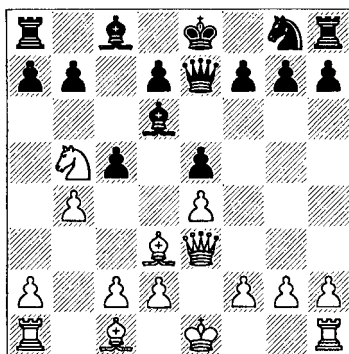
Bronstein's last move made 7...♘e7 unattractive, since 8 ♘b5

would follow. Black also wants to avoid 7...♘f6?? 8 e5, so he resorts to the text. However, in Bronstein's view, he should have continued with 7...b6 8 f4! ♙e7! 9 e5 d5, when the position resembles an odd French Defence.

8 ♘b5 ♙e7

Black loses after 8...♙e7? 9 ♙g3! a6 10 ♙xg7 ♙f6 11 ♘d6+ ♙e7 12 ♘f5+ – Bronstein.

9 b4! (D)



B

A wonderful move with overtones of the Sicilian Wing Gambit. Black's c-pawn is deflected from the centre and the a3-f8 diagonal becomes a potential factor in White's initiative.

9 ... cxb4

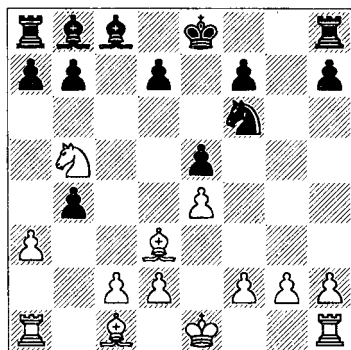
10 ♙g3 ♙b8

Believe it or not, the bishop just made its last move. Bronstein's further play is a marvel of ingenuity and positional sophistication.

11 ♙xg7 ♙f6

12 ♙xf6 ♘xf6

13 a3! (D)



B

Black's queenside is a mess, so Bronstein hurries to open lines for an attack. Further, the black a-pawn will now be pinned (or about to be pinned) for the remainder of the game, so Zaitsev will have no good way of evicting the knight from b5.

Zaitsev's king's bishop is not his only problem, for he must also be careful that White doesn't acquire the dark-square bishop for a knight, in which case his own dark squares will be very weak.

13 ... d5

14 f3 ♙g8

15 g3 ♙h3

16 exd5 ♙g2

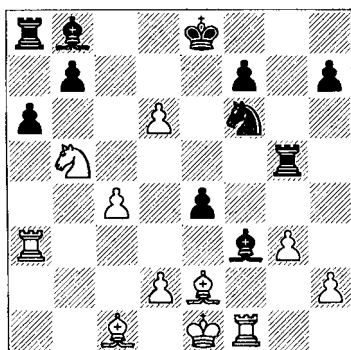
17 ♙g1 ♙xf3

18 d6!

Ensuring that the bishop will remain out of play and also setting up a potential ♘b5-c7 manoeuvre. It

has also become clear that Black will find it difficult, if not impossible, ever to bring his queen's rook into play. An extra bishop and rook is a lot to cede to Bronstein!

- 18 ... bxa3
 19 ♖f1 e4
 20 ♙e2 ♖g5
 21 c4! a6
 22 ♖xa3! (D)



B

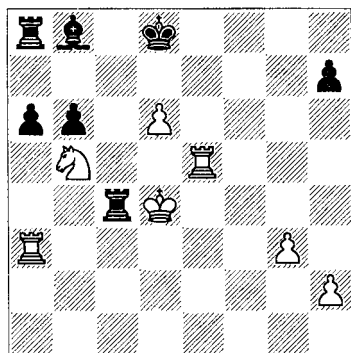
Bronstein makes the pin on the a-pawn official.

- 22 ... ♙xe2
 23 ♖xe2 ♘d7
 24 d4!

Either the d-pawn will support c4-c5 or Zaitsev will have to activate the white king.

- 24 ... exd3+
 25 ♖xd3 ♖c5
 26 ♙f4 f6
 27 ♖d4 b6
 28 ♖e1+ ♖d8
 29 ♖e6 ♘e5
 30 ♙xe5! fxe5+

- 31 ♖xe5 ♖xc4+! (D)



W

- 32 ♖d5!

It would be a horrible blunder to play 32 ♖xc4??, as then 32...axb5+ leaves White fighting for a draw.

- 32 ... ♖c5+
 33 ♖e6 ♖xe5+
 34 ♖xe5 ♖d7
 35 ♖d5 a5
 36 ♖a4 h5
 37 ♖f4 1-0

White is ready to queen the d-pawn and/or mate the black king.

What a beautiful game! Bronstein relates that German Grandmaster Lothar Schmid called it a "work of art" and said that it would be "his favourite for many years to come".

Bronstein makes the curious comment "White's main achievement was that the rook on a8 was not able to play a part in the game at all." It seems to me that this puts the cart before the horse, as the

rook would never have ended up out of play if Bronstein hadn't managed to lock away the bishop.

Perhaps motivated by his experience in the preceding game, Bronstein played an even more impressive game a few years later. In the Zaitsev game, the Problem Bishop arose almost by chance. In the following game, Bronstein finds an astonishing pawn sacrifice to create a Problem Bishop.

Bronstein – Beliavsky
Erevan 1975

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♙f5 5 ♘c5!? ♚b6 6 g4!?

White launches a plan of attack directed against Black's queen's bishop. The danger in this approach is that White's kingside pawns could end up weak and exposed.

6 ... ♙g6

7 f4 e6

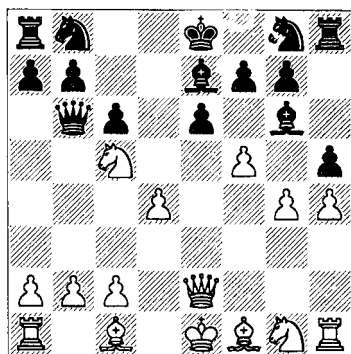
8 ♚e2 ♙e7

9 h4 h5

10 f5!?! (D)

This may be the single most imaginative move in this book. Bronstein sacrifices a pawn so that the bishop can be turned into a Problem Piece. It could well be that 10 f5 is unsound, but that really doesn't matter: one must take risks to play creative chess – and winning chess!

10 ... exf5



B

11 g5 ♘d7

Black has an extra pawn and faces no immediate danger. On the downside, he has some difficulty developing his kingside and his bishop is buried behind its own pawns. Of course, Black can always liberate the bishop by returning the pawn with ...f4 at some point, but then White is simply better, as he has a pawn in the centre and pressure on the f-file. Beliavsky is certainly to be commended for his refusal to accept an inferior game without a fight.

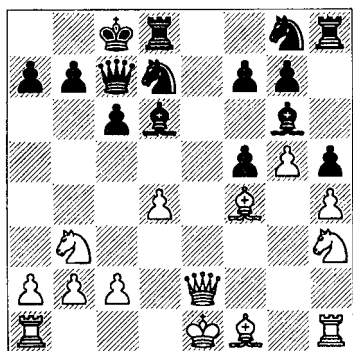
12 ♘b3 ♚c7

13 ♘h3 0-0-0

14 ♙f4 ♙d6 (D)

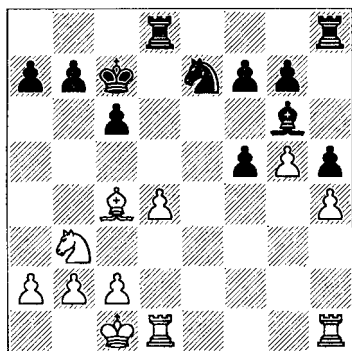
15 ♚h2!

Bronstein fights for control of the f4-square. A secret of the position is that White can afford to go into an ending, because a poorly placed piece's relative importance increases with fewer pieces on the board.



W

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 15 ... | ♖f8 |
| 16 0-0-0 | ♖e6 |
| 17 ♙xd6 | ♗xd6 |
| 18 ♙c4 | ♖e7 |
| 19 ♘f4 | ♘xf4 |
| 20 ♗xf4 | ♗dd8 |
| 21 ♗xc7+ | ♔xc7 (D) |



W

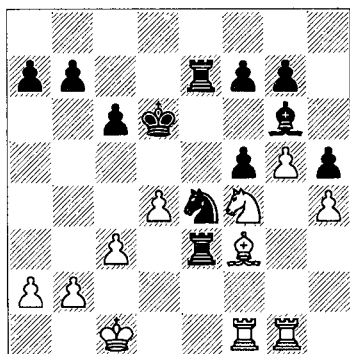
The ending has arrived. It seems to me that Black should sit tight and avoid the exchange of rooks, as he really doesn't want to get involved in a minor piece ending

with the bishop imprisoned at g6. However, Beliavsky sees matters differently and eventually pursues an exchange of all the rooks.

- | | |
|--------|------|
| 22 c3 | ♗he8 |
| 23 ♘c5 | ♘c8 |
| 24 ♘d3 | ♘d6 |
| 25 ♙b3 | ♗e3 |
| 26 ♘f4 | ♗de8 |

Black has gained some piece activity and it's difficult for White to make any progress without assistance from the opponent.

- | | |
|-------------|------|
| 27 ♗hg1 | ♗8e7 |
| 28 ♗df1 | ♘e4 |
| 29 ♙d1 | ♔d6 |
| 30 ♙f3! (D) | |



B

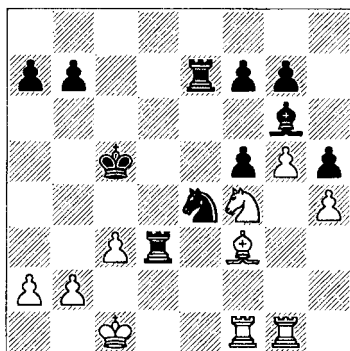
Ambitious play! White could capture at h5, but then Black would be able to exchange off his Problem Bishop.

- | | |
|--------|----|
| 30 ... | c5 |
|--------|----|

I'm not sure why Beliavsky did this. His rooks are already active, so it isn't to open files for them. It's

true that his king now reaches the fourth rank, but it can't penetrate further and White will now find it easier to create a passed pawn on the queenside.

- 31 dxc5+ ♔xc5
32 ♖g2 ♖d3
33 ♖f4 (D)



B

- 33 ... ♖d8?!

In hindsight, it seems clear that Black should have played 33...♖e3, when I don't see how White can make progress.

- 34 ♖d1! ♖ed7
35 ♖xd7 ♖xd7
36 ♖d1! ♖xd1+
37 ♔xd1 ♖d6

The minor-piece ending has arrived and White is very happy! Black still hasn't solved the plight of his bishop; after White gains the considerably more active king, it is as if he is two pieces ahead.

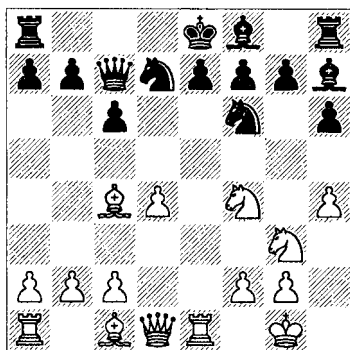
- 38 ♔c2 a5
39 a4 ♖b6

- 40 ♔d3 ♔c7
41 ♔d4 ♖c8
42 b4 axb4
43 cxb4 ♖e7
44 a5 f6

Belavsky was presumably loath to do this when rooks were on the board, because it would have given White a variety of targets.

- 45 gxf6 gxf6
46 ♔c5 ♔e8
47 b5 ♖b8
48 b6 1-0

Porreca – Bronstein
Belgrade 1954



B

There is a difference between a Problem Bishop and a bishop that plays to an unusual square. In the diagrammed position, Bronstein was concerned that the natural 11...e6 would invite a variety of piece sacrifices against e6. He produced a wonderful defence with ...

- 11 ... ♔g8!!

Now f7 is guarded, e6 will be well-defended and Black has time to castle queenside. Porreca didn't achieve anything special after 12 ♖d3 e6 13 ♙f4 ♙d6 14 ♙xd6 ♜xd6 15 ♜f5 ♜f8 16 ♜f3 0-0-0 17 ♜g3 ♙h7!

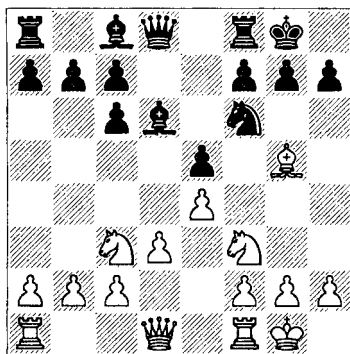
Black has solved his immediate problems and went on to win the ending eventually.

Problem bishops are sometimes caused by pawn avalanches. The manoeuvre in the following game is a useful one to know and is applicable more often than it is used.

Winter – Capablanca

Hastings 1919/20

1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜c3 ♜f6 4 ♙b5 ♙b4 5 0-0 0-0 6 ♙xc6 dxc6 7 d3 ♙d6 8 ♙g5 (D)



B

This is perhaps a bit dubious, as it either loses time or commits

White to exchanging bishop for knight. In *ECO C* (First Edition), Keres gives '8 d4!?' as an alternative.

8 ... h6

9 ♙h4?!

This natural move is a mistake, as the bishop will soon run the risk of getting stuck in a cul-de-sac of pawns.

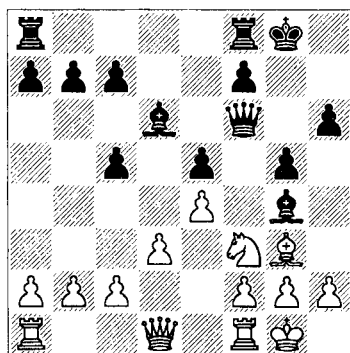
9 ... c5!

Black must make sure that the centre can't be opened if he's going to bury the bishop at g3. Winter could now have played 10 ♙xf6, but he failed to realize the danger. It was also acceptable to play 10 ♜d2, which would ensure that the bishop could get back into play after a subsequent f2-f3 if Black played along the same lines as the game.

10 ♜d5? g5!

11 ♜xf6+ ♜xf6

12 ♙g3 ♙g4! (D)



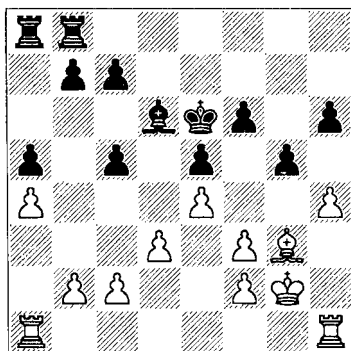
W

Passing sentence on White's bishop. After the looming exchange at f3, the f2-pawn will be unable to move, so the bishop will have no way back into the game. Keres evaluates this position as clearly better for Black.

13 h3 ♗xf3
14 ♖xf3 ♖xf3
15 gxf3 f6!

Useful prophylaxis against any subsequent d3-d4 breaks.

16 ♔g2 a5
17 a4 ♔f7
18 ♖h1 ♕e6
19 h4 ♖fb8 (D)



W

The sorry plight of the g3-bishop restricts it from doing anything on the queenside, so Capa takes play to the part of the board where he effectively has an extra piece. The rest requires no real comment:

20 hxc5 hxc5 21 b3 c6 22 ♖a2
b5 23 ♖ha1 c4 24 axb5 cxb3 25

cxb3 ♖xb5 26 ♖a4 ♖xb3 27 d4
♖b5 28 ♖c4 ♖b4 29 ♖xc6 ♖xd4 0-1

This game is undoubtedly a trifle, but a very instructive one.

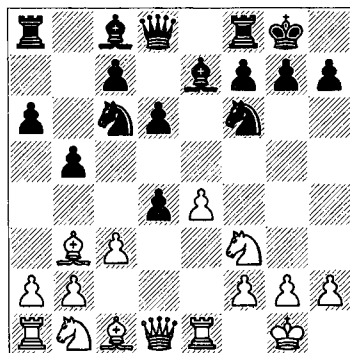
It's also possible for the Problem Bishop to be only one feature of a position. A later game of Capablanca's saw him bury an opponent's bishop but still encounter difficulties.

Capablanca – Bogoljubow

London 1922

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♖c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4
♗a4 ♖f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7
♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 d4 exd4 (D)

If Black wishes to adopt the line used by Bogoljubow in this game, it is better to play 9...♗g4 10 ♗e3 exd4, etc.



W

10 cxd4 ♗g4

Fighting for control of the dark squares, as White's d4 is a hole.

White should now continue with Lasker's 11 ♖c3!, when Matanović considers 11...♙xf3 12 gxf3 ♖a5 ± best play in *ECO C* (First Edition).

- | | |
|--------|-----|
| 11 ♙e3 | ♖a5 |
| 12 ♙c2 | ♖c4 |
| 13 ♙c1 | c5 |
| 14 b3 | ♖a5 |
| 15 ♙b2 | |

Best is 15 d5! ±. The point is that White wants to play d4-d5, but it's not clear if his bishop should go to b2 or stay on the c1-h6 diagonal.

- | | |
|---------|------|
| 15 ... | ♖c6 |
| 16 d5 | ♖b4 |
| 17 ♖bd2 | ♖xc2 |
| 18 ♙xc2 | ♙e8 |

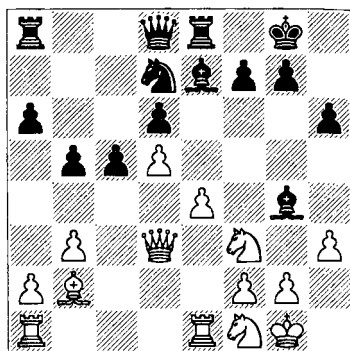
The positional jockeying has resulted in a pawn formation typical of the Modern Benoni. Black has a queenside majority, while White has a central majority that may translate into a passed d-pawn or a kingside attack. Matanović considers the position equal.

- | | |
|-----------|-----|
| 19 ♙d3 | h6 |
| 20 ♖f1 | ♖d7 |
| 21 h3 (D) | |

Putting the question to the bishop. If White were to play 21 ♖3d2 (aiming to hem in the bishop by 22 h3, 23 g4, etc.), then Black would just move the d7-knight and prepare to retreat along the c8-h3 diagonal.

- | | |
|--------|-------|
| 21 ... | ♙h5?! |
|--------|-------|

This is probably bad, as the bishop can now be harassed by a



B

kingside pawn storm. Superior was 21...♙xf3, with an unclear game.

It's possible that Bogoljubow realized the danger connected with 21...♙h5?!, but believed that the white position would be compromised (see note to Black's 26th move).

22 ♖3d2!

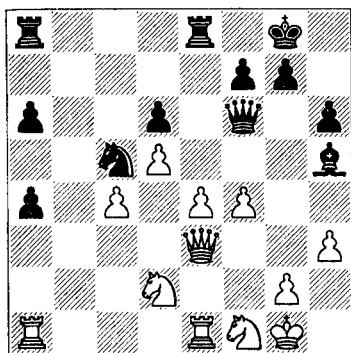
The bishop won't get a second chance to chop at f3. White will now try to bury the bishop with his kingside pawns, but its inability to escape means that Capa doesn't have to rush the advance.

22 ... ♙f6!?

A fighting move. Black could have played 22...f6!?, ensuring the bishop's retreat along the h5-e8 diagonal, but weakens e6 and does nothing to address White's space advantage.

- | | |
|---------|------|
| 23 ♙xf6 | ♙xf6 |
| 24 a4! | c4! |
| 25 bxc4 | ♖c5 |
| 26 ♙e3 | bxa4 |

27 f4! (D)



B

Capablanca judges that the time is right to start his kingside operations. The black pawn at a4 will provide Black with a lot of counterplay.

27 ... ♔e7

28 g4 ♙g6

29 f5 ♙h7

The bishop is now buried. It can be activated later by ...f7-f6, but the weakening of e6 will be serious.

This game is perhaps the most difficult to understand of any in the book. A quick look suggests that White should be much better, because the bishop is buried alive and White seems to have the better pawn structure. But the 'quick look' must be revised after a closer look. It's true that White's pawns are in one island, but their herky-jerky advance has left plenty of holes, so Black's four pawns and dark-square control can restrain

and even blockade the white pawns for some time to come. White's space advantage on the kingside indicates that he should attack there, but that appears to involve the double-edged g2-g4, h2-h4 and g4-g5. Does White want to expose his king that way?

Further, Black can generate activity on the queenside. His knight, incidentally, is a tremendous piece and the front a-pawn is a dangerous passed pawn rather than a weakness.

So who's better? For many years, I thought that White 'must be' better, but I'm not sure anymore. As we shall soon see, concrete lines always seem acceptable or even superior for Black. And remember: Capa was at the height of his powers at the time of this game; if he couldn't find a convincing way of demonstrating White's 'advantage', perhaps that's because there isn't any.

30 ♘g3 ♔e5

31 ♖g2 ♜ab8

32 ♜ab1 (D)

32 ... f6

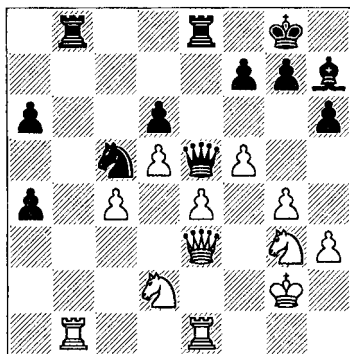
In *The Immortal Games of Capablanca*, Reinfeld gives 32...♜b2 as stronger, with the idea 33 ♜xb2 ♜xb2 34 ♜b1 ♔c2 35 ♖f3 ♘b3 'with strong pressure'.

33 ♘f3 ♜b2+

34 ♜xb2 ♔xb2+

35 ♜e2! ♔b3

36 ♘d4! ♔xe3



B

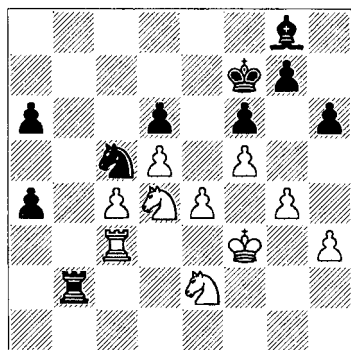
Bogoljubow decides to chop queens rather than to try his luck in the complications of 36...♙xc4. In *500 Master Games of Chess*, Tartakower and Du Mont give 37 ♖e6 “with very strong pressure in the centre”. Curiously, Reinfeld continues with 37...♜b8 38 ♜xc5 dxc5 39 ♜d2 ♜b3 (this seems silly, as White will soon push the d-pawn) 40 ♜f2 +–, but credits the analysis to Tartakower. This is apparently from a second source of Tartakower analysis, but I’ve been unable to track down the primary source, so all references to ‘Tartakower’ without Du Mont’s name stem from Reinfeld. It’s possible that in some cases Reinfeld conflated his own analysis with the ‘second Tartakower’ analysis.

It might seem that the ending should be ‘an easy win’ for White on account of Black’s bishop being locked out of play. In fact, the passed a-pawn, supported by the

rook and knight, yields an unclear ending.

37 ♜xe3	♜b8
38 ♜c3	♜f7
39 ♜f3	♜b2
40 ♜ge2	♜g8 (D)

Tartakower and Du Mont indicate that the further 41...♜e8 would equalize, so Capablanca must strike.



W

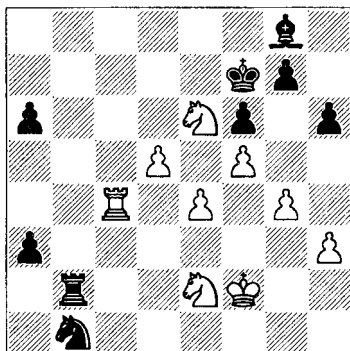
41 ♜e6! ♜b3

Or 41...♜xe4 42 ♜xe4 ♜xe2+ 43 ♜d4 ♜d2+ 44 ♜d3 +– – Tartakower and Du Mont.

42 c5!	dxc5
43 ♜xc5	♜d2+
44 ♜f2	♜e7?

Reinfeld cites analysis by Tartakower that runs 44...♜b1 45 ♜c4 (according to Reinfeld, Tartakower gives simply “45 ♜xa4 ♜xc3”, but Golombek continues 46 ♜xb2 ♜xe4+ 47 ♜e3 ♜d6 and “Black would still lose eventually after 48 ♜d4 ♜e7 49 ♜f4 followed by

♖e6"; this variation highlights the sorry state of Black's bishop) 45...a3 46 ♖e6! (D), with the divergence:



B

a) Tartakower believed that Black loses after 46...a2 47 d6. The idea is clear: White tries either to queen his d-pawn or to throw up a mating net around the black king. However, Black has sufficient time to force a draw with 47...♖e8 48 ♖c7 ♗xe6 49 fxe6 ♖b8 50 ♖f7! (50 ♖xg7? ♖f8 -+) 50...♖d8 51 ♖e7+ ♖f8 52 ♖f7+ ♖g8 (or 52...♖e8 53 ♖e7+=) 53 e7 ♖b8 54 d7 ♖xf7 55 d8 ♖ ♖xd8 56 exd8 ♖ a1 ♖ 57 ♖d5+, with a perpetual – Mayer. It's possible that 46...a2 47 d6 stems from Reinfeld and was interpolated in Tartakower's analysis in 'b' below, as it's difficult to believe that a GM didn't find Black's forcing defence.

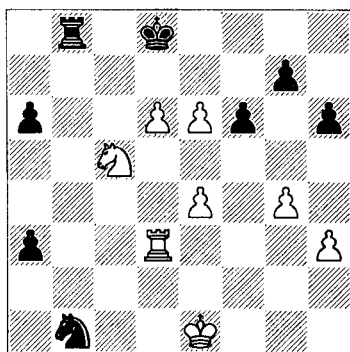
b) More straightforward is 46...♖e7 47 ♖c7+ ♖d6 48 ♖c6+

♖e7 and White should give perpetual – Tartakower.

45 ♖e1 ♖b1
46 ♖d3 a3?

Better was 46...♖d6 47 ♖xa4 ♖b4 48 ♖ac3 ♖xc3 49 ♖xc3 ♗f7 50 ♖d2 g6 and "Black could still put up a fight." – Tartakower and Du Mont.

47 d6+ ♖d8
48 ♖d4 ♖b6
49 ♖de6+ ♗xe6
50 fxe6 ♖b8 (D)



W

51 e7+ ♖e8
52 ♖xa6 1-0

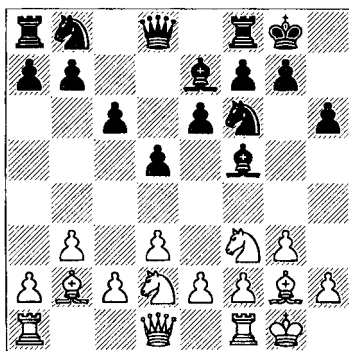
White's knight and d-pawn make an impressive team. Even the a-pawn doesn't save Black, e.g., 52...a2 53 ♖xb8 a1 ♖ 54 d7+ and White will soon mate.

There are cases where a Problem Bishop is taken on willingly. One must then work to free the Problem Bishop or face long-term

problems. Reshevsky ultimately loses the following game because he doesn't improve the situation of his Problem Bishop. Further, he exchanges too many pieces and finds – like Bogoljubow and Beliavsky in prior examples – that a Problem Piece becomes more and more important the fewer the pieces remaining on the board.

Korchnoi – Reshevsky
Amsterdam, Candidates'
Match (4) 1968

1 f3 f6 2 g3 d5 3 g2 c6 4 b3
 f5 5 b2 e6 6 0-0 e7 7 d3 h6 8
 bd2 0-0 (D)



W

9 e1

A sophisticated move. Korchnoi would like to advance his e-pawn, but it requires support. The natural approach would be to play 9 e1 , but he may later wish to advance his f-pawn, so he leaves the rook

where it is. Another method of advancing the e-pawn is 9 e3 , 10 e2 and 11 e4 , with the same piece arrangement for White as that which arises after his eleventh move.

9 ... bd7
 10 e4 h7

The black bishop is stifled by the white pawn chain c2-d3-e4. Reshevsky's method of development is acceptable in the event that White plays an early c2-c4, as then the white chain is weakened. Here it is less appropriate. One situation in which it could work out for Black is if he had his c-pawn at c5, as he could then play for a later ...c4, which would hack away at the pawns that are containing the bishop.

11 e2 a5
 12 a4 b6
 13 e5 e8
 14 h3!

Korchnoi takes steps to slow down or prevent a move of the f-pawn. Further, ... f5 would now result in doubled pawns.

14 ... c7
 15 h1 ae8
 16 h4

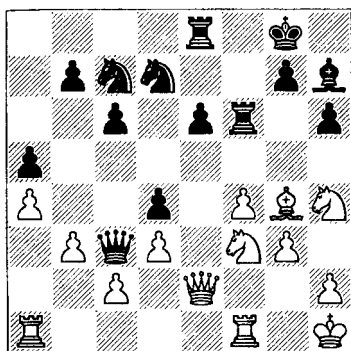
Paving the way for the advance of the f-pawn and offering Black the chance to play 16... hx4 , when White gains dangerous play down the g-file.

16 ... f6
 17 xf6 xf6
 18 xf6 xf6

19 f4

Grabbing control of e5 and keeping the black e-pawn as a target.

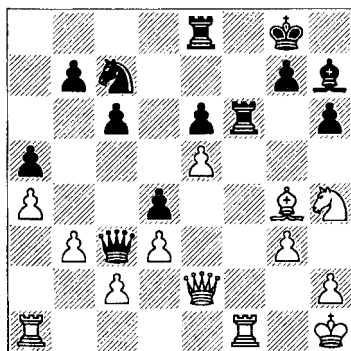
19 ... ♖c5
20 ♘df3 ♖c3
21 ♙g4 d4 (D)



W

Black prepares ...♗d5, which homes in on the weakened e3-square.

22 ♗e5 ♗xe5
23 fxe5 (D)



B

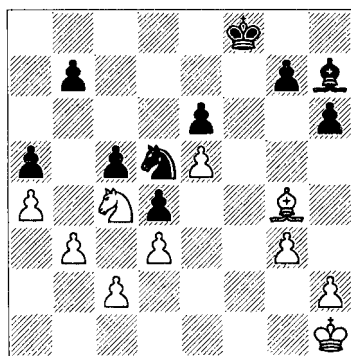
23 ... ♖xf1+

This plays into White's hands, as it leaves fewer pieces on the board, thus making the plight of the h7-bishop relatively more important.

24 ♖xf1 ♖c5
25 ♖f2 ♖f8
26 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8
27 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8

The minor-piece ending is difficult for Black, as he has yet to find a way to liberate his Problem Bishop.

28 ♗f3 c5
29 ♗d2 ♗d5
30 ♗c4 (D)



B

30 ... ♗b4?

In *Candidates' Matches 1968*, Furman and Kirillov point out that 30...♗e7 was better, with the idea that 31 ♗xa5 ♗e3 32 ♙f3 b6 is equal. However, they also suggest that White could play 31 ♙f3 or bring his king to the defence of the

c-pawn, which in either case ‘retains winning chances’.

The rest of the game, while requiring some accuracy, doesn’t require any further comment: 31 ♖xa5 ♜xc2 32 ♜xb7 c4 33 bxc4 ♙xd3 34 ♜c5 ♙xc4 35 ♙xe6 ♙xe6 36 ♜xe6+ ♚e7 37 ♜c5 ♜b4 38 a5 ♜c6 39 a6 ♚d8 40 ♚g2 g6

41 e6 ♚e7 42 ♚f3 ♚d6 43 ♚e4 g5 44 g4 1-0

Verdict: While the Problem Bishop does not occur as frequently as the Problem Knight, it’s still common. It tends to occur when a bishop is on the side or toward the side of the board.

7 The Over-rated Knight

One of the most difficult things in all of chess is seeing a position as a whole. It's very easy for even a grandmaster to pick one feature of a position, such as a well-placed piece, and decide that it's the most important thing on the entire board. It's not uncommon to see an annotator point to a really well-placed piece and explain how its owner is better or has a winning game because of it. Indeed, this will even be true in many cases.

However, it's also possible to take a piece that looks wonderful and decide that it's terrific, when in fact it does little for one's position. I call such pieces 'over-rated', as they are literally given too much credit. Over-rating can occur with any piece, but it seems to be most common with knights or bishops. A queen is so intrinsically powerful that if it looks well-placed, it probably *is* well-placed. Similarly, a rook on an open file and the seventh rank is usually doing exactly what you want it to do.

One of the problems that an over-rated bishop can encounter is that it lacks meaningful objects of attack, e.g., the opponent's pawns are on the colour opposite to the

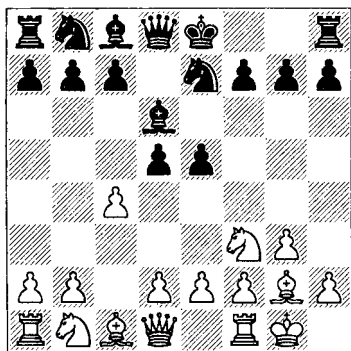
bishop. The knight, with its ability to attack both colours, can frequently avoid this fate. Yet something similar can happen and it is inherent in the way a knight moves. Let's say that we get a knight to a good post where it can't be driven away. To do so, we may well have to take several moves. If the knight proves unable to attack anything directly from its 'pretty position', then the time spent in getting it there may prove critical. Further, because two knights may both want the same post, they can end up tripping over each other; this is Dvoretzky's concept of *The Superfluous Piece*, which we shall have occasion to discuss in connection with the following game.

Larsen – Donner
Beverwijk 1960

**1 g3 e5 2 ♖g2 d5 3 ♜f3 ♙d6 4 0-0
♜e7 5 c4 (D)**

In *Larsen's Selected Games of Chess 1948-69*, Larsen queries this move and comments that it is 'not very effective in this position', presumably because Black is able to support his centre with 5...c6.

5 ... c6



B

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 6 | d3 | 0-0 |
| 7 | ♘bd2 | ♘d7 |
| 8 | e4 | dxe4 |
| 9 | ♘xe4 | ♙c7 |
| 10 | b3 | |

“10 d4 exd4 11 ♖xd4 ♘e5 is good for Black” – Larsen. The most important feature of the position then would be White’s weaknesses in the d-file.

- | | | |
|----|------|-----|
| 10 | ... | ♙e8 |
| 11 | ♙b2 | ♘f5 |
| 12 | ♙e1 | ♘f8 |
| 13 | ♖d2 | f6 |
| 14 | ♙ad1 | |

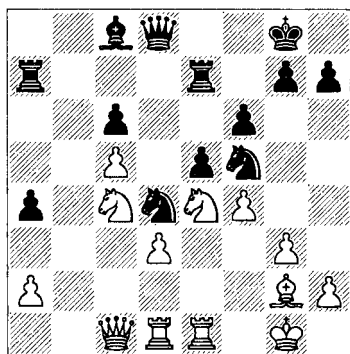
Larsen gives 14 d4 as equalizing, while he suggests that 14 b4 immediately would possibly be better if White is playing for a win.

- | | | |
|----|-----|-----|
| 14 | ... | ♘e6 |
| 15 | b4 | a5 |
| 16 | b5 | ♙b6 |

Larsen considers 16...cxb5 worthy of ‘serious attention’. With the text, Donner plays to retain control of the d5-square, but he also allows

his queenside to be torn up, thus giving Larsen a source of potential counterplay.

- | | | |
|----|--------|------|
| 17 | bxc6 | bxc6 |
| 18 | ♖c1 | a4 |
| 19 | c5 | ♙a5 |
| 20 | ♙c3 | ♙e7 |
| 21 | ♙xa5 | ♙xa5 |
| 22 | ♘fd2 | ♘ed4 |
| 23 | ♘c4 | ♙aa7 |
| 24 | f4 (D) | |



B

Larsen makes an insightful comment here:

“Of course Black has every reason to be proud of the knight on d4, but exaggerated care for it now leads him astray. The black position must not be overestimated; also the white knights are full of pep.

“Black should play 24...exf4, but Donner thought that the centralized knight deserved to keep its solid pawn protection. During the rest of the game this knight does not do very much.”

One thing that's remarkable about this game is how well-placed all four knights appear to be. Whose knights are actually better placed? A straightforward arithmetic approach suggests that Black's are; after all, White's knights are 'only' on the fourth rank, while Black has a knight on the fourth rank and a somewhat further advanced knight on the fifth rank.

You may have noticed that the black knights 'link up' with each other. This can sometimes be a very useful arrangement, as it means that one knight can replace another if an exchange occurs. In fact, Mark Dvoretsky has made a useful discovery that he terms The Superfluous Piece. Let's see how he described The Superfluous Piece in his excellent *Training for the Tournament Player*:

"From Nimzowitsch's writing we know that pieces which are able to cover a strategically important square, making it possible to occupy that square, are usually well-placed.

"In the fight for a given square players most often try to exchange these pieces off. But sometimes a totally different strategy is adopted: if the square cannot be won back by means of exchanges, then one may ... forget about exchanges altogether (after all, only one of the opponent's pieces will be able to

occupy the 'important high ground', and the others will turn out to be, so to speak, superfluous)."

In Larsen-Donner, we see an excellent illustration of The Superfluous Piece, and it helps us to determine whose knights are really better placed. Donner's knights look impressive, but only one of them can occupy d4, while the other has no special square that beckons. Thus, Donner's knight at f5 is superfluous. By contrast, Larsen's knights both occupy good squares in their own right and have the potential of playing into the hole at d6. At the moment, however, a white knight playing into d6 would make the other knight largely superfluous, as it would have no better square to play to than its present post. In part, this is the reason behind Larsen's suggesting 24...exf4 here, as no new squares would open up for the white knights.

In conclusion, I think that we could say that each side's knights are equally well-placed following White's 24th move. However, this evaluation will soon change.

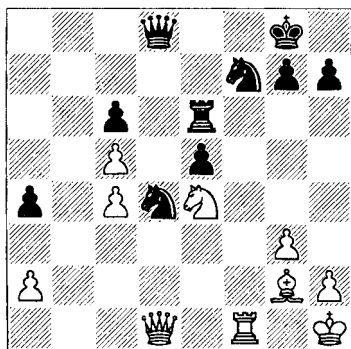
24 ...	♙e6?
25 fxe5	fxe5
26 ♖h1!	

A subtle move. Larsen ensures that the knight at d4 can never check the white king.

And now we can see how Donner's mistake at move 24 has hurt

his position. His own knights still have the same possibilities as before and the knight at f5 is still superfluous. But the white knights have gained a number of possibilities, for example, the knight at c4 presses on the weak e5-pawn, while the knight at e4 has gained the possibility of using g5 as a staging ground for tactical operations on the kingside and possible entry to the hole at e6. Consequently, if either white knight plays into d6, the other knight will still retain possibilities of improving its current placement and therefore avoid the fate of Dvoretsky's Superfluous Piece.

- | | |
|-------------|------|
| 26 ... | ♙d5 |
| 27 ♖f1 | ♖e6 |
| 28 ♖f2 | ♖f7 |
| 29 ♖df1 | ♙xc4 |
| 30 dxc4 | ♘h6 |
| 31 ♖xf7 | ♘xf7 |
| 32 ♖d1! (D) | |



B

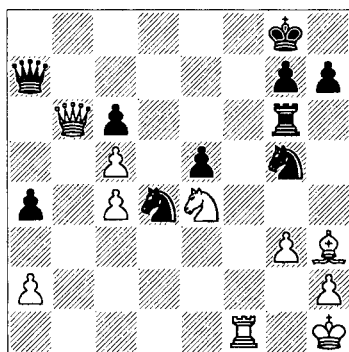
White menaces the a-pawn and also prepares to swing his queen over to the kingside.

It's interesting that the Superfluous Knight that once stood at f5 has found itself all the way back to f7. No method of improving its placement arose when it was at f5 and its placement subsequently decayed.

- | | |
|--------|-----|
| 32 ... | ♖a5 |
| 33 ♖h5 | ♖c7 |
| 34 ♙h3 | ♖h6 |

Larsen gives this two question marks and suggests 34...♖e7, when Black may still be able to defend the position.

- | | |
|-------------|-----|
| 35 ♖g4 | ♖g6 |
| 36 ♖d1 | ♖a7 |
| 37 ♖b1! | ♘g5 |
| 38 ♖b6! (D) | |



B

- | | |
|---------|------|
| 38 ... | ♖a8 |
| 39 ♘xg5 | ♖xg5 |
| 40 ♖c7 | h6 |
| 41 ♖b1 | 1-0 |

Resignation is appropriate, as 41...♖h7 42 ♔g2 or 41...♚a6 42 ♔f1 both give White decisive attacks. "What did the knight on d4 really accomplish?" – Larsen.

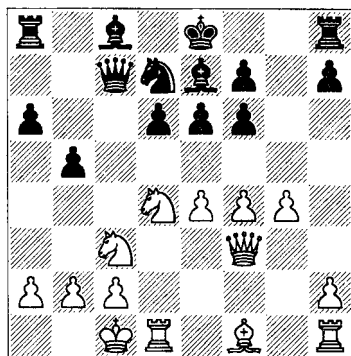
Larsen's comments on Donner's 'overestimating' the black position give us additional insight into the nature of over-rated pieces. In an abstract case, a knight occupying a hole or a bishop on a wide-open diagonal are both excellent pieces. The 'over-rating' is a *human* failing, not a failure of the position or the 'laws of chess strategy'. Indeed, a good computer program will typically not fall into the problem of 'over-rating' a piece, as its evaluations are analytical in nature. Whether over-rating is a function of psychology (undue optimism, self-satisfaction) or aesthetics (the piece looks 'beautiful'), it seems to be peculiar to humans.

There's an old line, generally attributed to Steinitz, that a knight at e6 is like a rusty nail in the knee. It's true that such a knight can cause the defender a pain in the knee, but it's also been known to happen that the knight is over-rated.

Kotkov – Belinkov USSR 1971

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
♜xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 a6 6 ♔g5 e6 7 f4

♙e7 8 ♚f3 ♚c7 9 0-0-0 ♜bd7 10
g4 b5 11 ♙xf6 gxf6!? (D)



W

Fischer's choice; Black accepts doubled f-pawns, but hopes to demonstrate that his dark-square control and central pawn mass are more important.

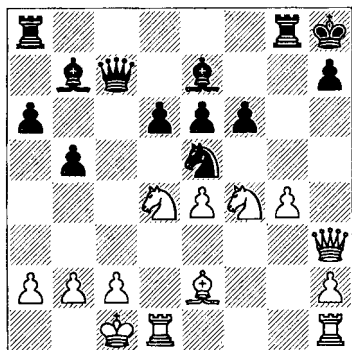
12 f5 ♙e5
13 ♚h3 0-0!

White is playing for pressure on e6 and a kingside attack. With his last move, Black reasons that his king will prove difficult to mate, as White has a relatively limited front in which to operate.

14 ♜ce2 ♙h8
15 ♜f4 ♚g8

Both sides are pursuing laudable goals; White has stepped up the pressure on e6, while Black has taken steps to strengthen the defence of his king.

16 ♙e2 ♙b7!
17 fxe6 fxe6 (D)
18 ♜dxe6?



W

Kotkov captures with the wrong knight! He must have thought that the f4-knight would later perform good service from its present location, but he would have done better with 18 Nfxe6! W a5 19 Nf5! and White is for choice – Gufeld in *Informator 11*.

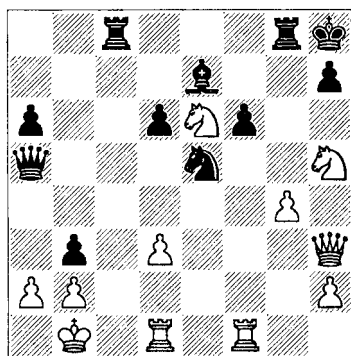
It's interesting that in the above variation, White gets a knight to e6 under much more favourable circumstances than in the game continuation. The secret is not the strength of the knight at e6, but the fact that the other knight stays in the *centre* and gains the valuable f5-square. As Kotkov played, the white knight on f4 is a Superfluous Piece, as it must support the e6-knight and has no other really good square to which it can play.

18 ... W a5
19 Q b1 Q xe4

Black has the bishop pair and the e6-knight is not as impressive as it might look at first glance. This

position is assessed as $\bar{+}$ by Gipslis in *ECO B, Second Edition*, although I would be inclined to call it unclear. As a side note, Gipslis did not note White's possible improvement at move 18, thus giving the casual reader the false impression that Black is better in the lines arising from 16 Q e2 .

20 N hf1 N ac8
21 Q d3 Q xd3
22 cxd3 b4
23 N h5 b3! (D)

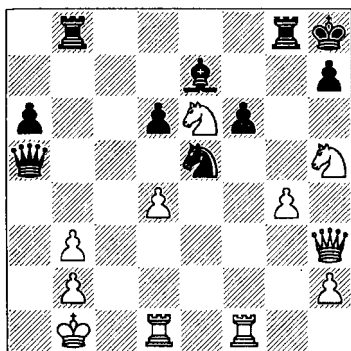


W

White's knights hover menacingly close to the black king, but there is no good way for them to break down the defence. Meanwhile, Black is pursuing a king attack of his own.

24 axb3 N b8
25 d4 (D)

White doesn't care to get involved in 25 Nxf6 Qxf6 26 Nxf6 Nxb3 , although it is not clear who this favours.



B

- 25 ... ♖c6
26 ♜f5 ♜b5
27 d5?

Now Black is able to crash in with his pieces. The correct continuation was 27 ♜xb5! – defenders should simplify – when the natural 27...axb5, going for play down the a-file, allows the pretty 28 ♖xf6! ♙xf6 29 ♜f3, when White is doing well – Mayer.

- 27 ... ♖b4
28 ♜c3 ♜a2+
29 ♙c1 ♖xd5!
30 ♖g5

Playing for a trick (30...♖xc3?? 31 ♖f7#), but now Black wins massive material. However, 30 ♜fxd5 was no better, since Black then has a winning attack after 30...♜xb3 31 ♜c2 ♜gb8.

- 30 ... ♜a1+
31 ♙d2 ♜xd1+
32 ♙xd1 ♖xc3+
33 bxc3 ♜xg5

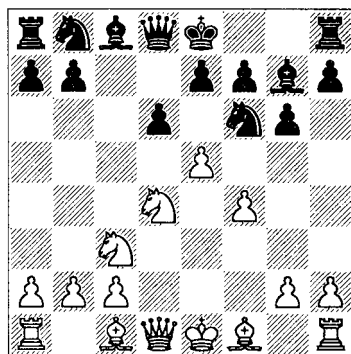
0-1

There are also cases where one side gets a knight to a central hole on the sixth rank but lacks the proper development (or piece placement) to do much with it. The following game is a good illustration of this.

Cheney – Mayer

Washington, D.C. 1990

- 1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 f4 ♙g7!? 7 e5 (D)



B

- 7 ... ♖h5!

There was a time when 6...♙g7!? was considered practically a losing move, as White's e-pawn push is very disruptive to the black position. Indeed, the position after White's seventh move is known as the 'Levenfish Trap' and it is certainly a trap if Black falls into something like 7...dxe5? 8 fxe5 and then 8...♖d5 9 ♙b5+!, 8...♖g4

9 ♖b5+! or 8...♗fd7 9 e6!. However, after 7...♗h5!, matters are not so clear, because Black threatens the trick 8...♗xf4! 9 ♖xf4 dxe5 -+.

8 ♖b5+	♗d7
9 e6	fxe6
10 ♗xe6	♖xc3+
11 bxc3	♗c8!

Before this finesse was discovered, Black had tried 11...♗a5?, but then the reply 12 ♖d2! is good for White, for example, 12...♖xb5 13 c4.

After 11...♗c8!, the knight at e6 is a bit unstable and the white c-pawns are suddenly under pressure. Of course, White has the bishops and the knight prevents Black from castling, but things are very obscure here. It could be that White has the better chances in the midgame, but it's practically certain that Black has the better endgame chances.

12 ♗d3	♗c6
13 ♗g5	

Now the knight really hangs, so White brings it back out.

13 ...	0-0
14 0-0	♗f6
15 ♖d2	♖f5
16 ♗e2	♖g4!?

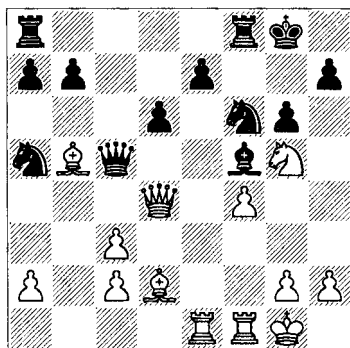
It was also possible to play 16...♖xc2, but this was a last-round money game and I had no desire to grab an isolated pawn that I felt 'wasn't going to run away'.

17 ♗d3	♗a5!
--------	------

Black must exercise caution, of course, but the secret to this position is that White has difficulty finding anything useful to do with his queen's bishop. Meanwhile, Black is crawling all over the light squares and targeting both c3 and c2.

18 ♖ae1	♖f5
19 ♗d4	♗c5! (D)

Black's advantages show better in the ending.



W

20 ♗xc5	dxc5
21 c4?	

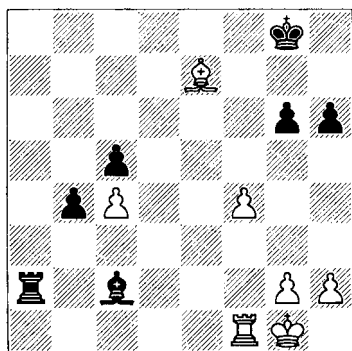
This is a mistake, after which Black is able to overrun the white queenside. Also mistaken was 21 ♗xe7? c4!, when the bishop is imprisoned and soon to be trapped. However, after the superior 21 ♖d3!, White would cover the c2-pawn and really threaten the e-pawn.

21 ...	a6!
22 ♖xa5	axb5

23 ♖c3 b4
24 ♖a1 ♜fe8!

Black prevents the entry of the white rook before he cleans out the queenside.

25 ♜e2 h6
26 ♘e6 ♜xa2
27 ♘xc5 b6
28 ♙xf6 bxc5
29 ♜xe7 ♜xe7
30 ♙xe7 ♙xc2 (D)



W

The ending is winning for Black and requires no further comment:

31 ♙xc5 b3 32 ♙d4 b2 33 ♙xb2 ♜xb2 34 ♜f2 ♜b1+ 35 ♜f1 ♜xf1+ 36 ♘xf1 ♙d3+ 37 ♘f2 ♙xc4 38 g4 ♘f7 39 ♘e3 ♙d5 40 ♘d4 ♙f3 41 g5 h5 42 ♘e5 ♙g4 43 ♘d6 ♙f5 44 ♘d5 ♘e7 45 ♘e5 ♘d7 46 ♘d5 ♘c7 47 ♘c5 ♘b7 48 ♘b5 ♙d3+ 49 ♘c5 ♘a6 50 ♘c6 ♘a5 51 ♘c5 ♙f5 52 ♘c4 ♘b6 53 ♘b4 ♘c6 54 ♘c4 ♘d6 55 ♘d4 ♘e6 56 h4 ♙b1 57 ♘e3 ♘f5 58 ♘f3 ♙c2 59 ♘g3 ♘e4 0-1

The white knight, which kept hopping in and out of e6, never really found a place to call home.

As should be clear by now, a knight can become over-rated when there are other features of a position that are important. Indeed, there are many opening variations that include what could be called over-rated knights, for example, the Dragon game we just looked at. However, probably the most common are those Sicilian Variations in which Black plays an early ...e7-e5 and allows a white knight to occupy d5. The best known of these lines is the Sveshnikov: 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e5 6 ♘db5 d6. After the further 7 ♙g5 a6 8 ♙xf6 gxf6 9 ♘a3 b5 10 ♘d5 f5, it is clear that the d5-knight is not the only thing in the position. Black has the bishop pair, a central majority and the white knight on a3 might even be termed a Problem Piece, as it's on the side of the board and has no good squares available for the foreseeable future. This position gives us some insight into how a knight can be over-rated.

Another instance of an arguably over-rated knight occurs in the King's Indian after the sequence 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♙g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♙e2 0-0 6 ♘f3 e5 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 d5 ♘e7 9 b4 (the Bayonet Attack) 9... ♘h5 10 g3 f5 11 ♘g5. White's

king's knight angles for the gaping hole at e6, but the cost is two tempi and possible loss of the pawn at e6. While this variation is very theoretical nowadays and still very much in flux, one has to wonder if White's knight isn't a tad over-rated.

Verdict: An over-rated knight is objectively well placed but is subjectively given too much importance in assessing a position. The over-rated knight is most common in dynamic positions where there are other important factors that are not considered or given their due.

8 The Over-rated Bishop

In this chapter we examine over-rated bishops. We are already familiar with the concept of the over-rated piece from the chapter on over-rated knights. As we saw there, an over-rated piece is one that looks very impressive but proves to be less important than one might think. Further, there is an element of human failing, since the side with the over-rated bishop usually is guilty of placing too much value on an otherwise well placed piece.

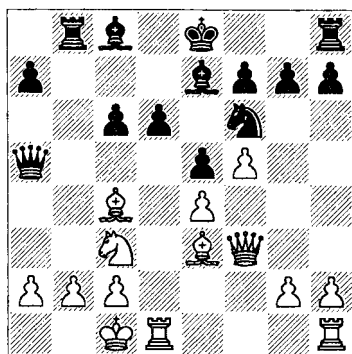
The following example is particularly striking, as White has not only an impressive-looking bishop but also an impressive-looking middlegame position.

Lukovnikov – Polugaevsky

Krasnodar 1983

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♔xd4 e6 5 ♘c3 d6 6 f4 ♘f6 7 ♙e3 ♙e7 8 ♚f3 e5 9 ♘xc6 bxc6 10 f5 ♚b8 11 0-0-0 ♚a5 12 ♙c4 (D)

As Polugaevsky explained in his excellent book *The Sicilian Labyrinth Volume 1*, he unexpectedly found himself in a difficult position while still in the opening. It's not that his position is objectively bad,



B

but he has managed to reach a theoretical position that he knew little about at the time, while he had to assume that his opponent knew it inside out.

White's plan is both simple and dangerous. Left to his own devices, he will mobilize his qualitative pawn majority by advancing his g-pawn. The black king will have difficulty surviving such an onslaught, particularly as the c4-bishop and the queen can join in the attack with ease.

Black has trumps, of course, most noticeably in the half-open b-file and his central majority. However, as Polugaevsky well knew, White had won many games from this position in the 1970s when

Black had relied solely on obvious counterplay. How can he, without especially knowing the accumulated theory of the day, resist the white attack?

12 ... h5!!

‘!!’ – Polugaevsky.

‘!?’ – Psakhis and Stetsko in *Informator* 38.

“I am not afraid to attach two exclamation marks to Black’s reply, despite all its drawbacks. In a difficult psychological situation this prophylactic operation enabled me to solve a problem of primary importance: to prevent the white g-pawn from storming forward.” – Polugaevsky.

Of course, Black must worry now that his king will have problems, but it *already* had problems. The genius of Polugaevsky’s move is that it is both generally sound – Nimzowitsch certainly would have liked it! – and it forces his opponent to confront new problems at the board.

13 ♖b3 ♗a6

14 ♔b1

A lacklustre move. One gets the impression that White was disarmed once Polugaevsky deprived him of his obvious plan. Perhaps Lukovnikov felt that he had time for quiet moves that ‘safeguard’ his king position.

A sharper approach is 14 h3 (‘!’ – Psakhis and Stetsko) 14...h4 15 g4 hxg3 16 ♖xg3 ♗h6 17 h4 (intending

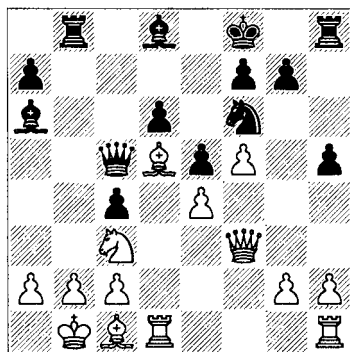
to advance the pawn to h6) 17...c5 18 ♗g5! c4 19 ♗a4+ ♖f8 20 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 21 ♗xd6 ♗e7!, with unclear play in Psakhis-Pritchett, Troon 1984.

Psakhis’s appraisal of 14 h3 shows the dynamic nature of chess. As we shall see, Polugaevsky considers the similar move in this game a mistake of major proportions.

14 ... c5
15 ♗c1 c4
16 ♗a4+ ♖f8
17 ♗c6

The bishop plays around to the hole at d5, where it appears that it will be very well-placed.

17 ... ♖c5
18 ♗d5 ♗d8! (D)



W

Hitting the nail on the head! It is usually a good idea for a minor piece to occupy a hole, particularly when it’s in the centre. In the given case, however, the bishop at d5 is

what I mean by 'over-rated'; it looks terrific, but it is difficult for White to do anything really useful with it. As Polugaevsky explains, "The point is that Black has not in fact lost control of the d5-square, which is being carefully guarded by the knight at f6, while the central bishop is essentially tying the hands of its own rook and knight, which cannot leave it in proud isolation."

With 18...♙d8, Black prepares to place White's knight at c3 under 'constant surveillance' by ...♙a5, when it may be possible to exchange at c3 at an opportune moment and then eliminate the over-rated bishop by ...♜xd5.

19 h3

Polugaevsky queries this move, as it allows Black to damage the white pawn structure. On strict positional grounds, White should prepare the advance of the g-pawn by g2-g3, h2-h3, and only then g3-g4. As mentioned above, two-time Soviet champion Lev Psakhis believes that the opening of the g-file in such positions can be worthwhile.

19 ...	h4
20 g4	hxc3
21 ♖xc3	♙a5
22 ♖hg1	♖h7!

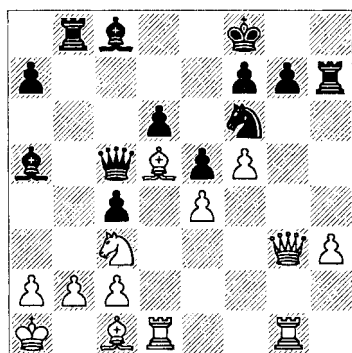
The black rook defends g7 while remaining active on the half-open h-file. Black's king position seems to be secure, while the white king

position is safeguarded at the high cost of keeping the c3-knight and c1-bishop nearby. Finally, Black's endgame prospects should be better, as the pawns at e4 and h3 make very nice targets.

23 ♙a1

Polugaevsky points out that 23 ♙xf7 fails to 23...♙xc3.

23 ... ♙c8! (D)



W

24 ♙d2?

A mistake in a difficult position. Polugaevsky points out that 24 ♙xf7? ♙xc3 25 ♙g6 ♜xe4 is good for Black, so 24 ♖gf1 should have been played.

24 ... ♙xf5!

25 ♙xf7

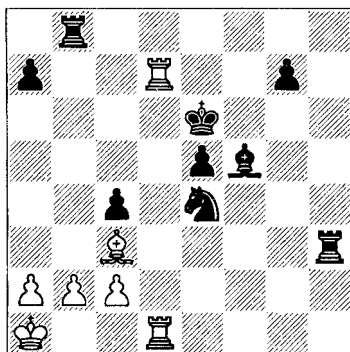
Polugaevsky analyses two alternatives, viz., 25 exf5 ♙xc3 26 ♙xc3 ♜xd5 27 ♙xe5 dxe5 28 ♖xe5 ♖b6! and 25 ♖gf1 ♙g6!, which safeguards the black king and consolidates the extra pawn.

25 ... ♙xc3

26 ♖xc3 ♜xe4
 27 ♖f3 ♖f2!
 28 ♖xf2 ♜xf2
 29 ♖xd6

Black wins the ending after 29 ♖df1 ♖xf7 30 ♖xf2 ♖e6 – Polugaevsky.

29 ... ♖xf7
 30 ♖f1 ♖xh3
 31 ♖d2 ♜e4
 32 ♖d7+ ♖e6
 33 ♖fd1 (D)



B

33 ... ♖h1

This wins, but 33...♖g4 is a shade stronger, as it wins the exchange – Mayer.

34 ♖xh1 ♖xd7
 35 ♖xe5 ♖g8

0-1

Games such as Lukovnikov-Polugaevsky show the importance of original thought in chess. Whether Black's idea is good or bad, it is certainly logical and

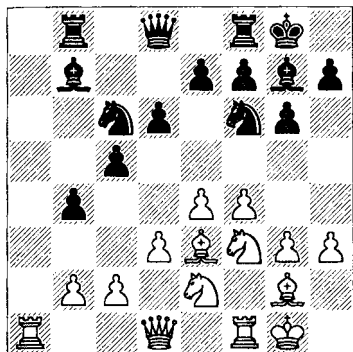
helped him win a game that might have turned out poorly for him if he'd been a slave to convention.

Since the middle of the century, the most popular approach to chess has been that of seeking active counterplay. Indeed, most experienced players probably prefer an inferior position that has counterplay to one that is just a shade worse but offers no possibilities of counterplay and allows the opponent to 'grind away'. In the following game, Geller gets his fair share of counterplay, but Spassky's well-timed defensive measures limit the damage. When Geller fails to take appropriate actions against Spassky's pending attack, the result is carnage for the black king.

Spassky – Geller
Sukhumi, Candidates'
Match (6) 1968

1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 d6 3 g3 ♘c6 4 ♖g2 g6 5 d3 ♖g7 6 f4 ♜f6 7 ♜f3 0-0 8 0-0 ♖b8 9 h3 b5 10 a3 a5 11 ♖e3 b4 12 axb4 axb4 13 ♜e2 ♖b7 (D)

Each side has 'his' respective side of the board: Black attacks on the queenside while White is going for the king. However, a certain amount of defence is also necessary. The fourth game of the match saw 14 ♖d2, but Black's rook subsequently reached a2 and tied down the white queen to the defence of



W

the c-pawn. Spassky won that game also with a nice kingside attack, but he came to the board for his next White with a big improvement prepared.

14 b3! ♖a8
15 ♖c1!

Spassky's manoeuvre (14 b3! and 15 ♖c1!) is designed to clear the long diagonal of any targets. The black king's bishop now looks pretty, but there's nothing to attack on its diagonal. Further, White uses the rook to defend c2, thus freeing up his queen to play around to h4 and join in the kingside attack.

15 ... ♖a2
16 g4 ♖a8

The closed centre is what gives White's pending attack its strength. Vasiukov, cited in Cafferty's *Candidates' Matches 1968*, suggests 16...e6!, with the idea of gaining counterplay in the centre:

a) 17 f5 exf5! 18 exf5 (18 gxf5 can be answered by 18...♗e8 or

18...♘h5) 18...♗e8 is the typical expression of Black's plan.

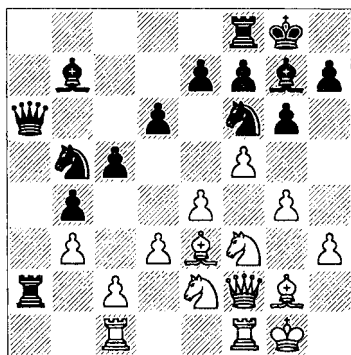
b) 17 ♖e1 ♗a6 slows down the thematic transfer of the queen to h4, as 18 ♖h4? allows 18...♗xd3 or 18...♘xe4.

17 ♖e1 ♖a6
18 ♖f2

The immediate 18 ♖h4 ♘xe4! is good for Black.

In *Modern Chess Brilliances*, Evans suggests that Black should now continue 18...♘d7, which he assesses as equal.

18 ... ♘a7
19 f5 ♘b5 (D)



W

20 fxf6!

This attack is 'anti-positional' in that it captures away from the centre, but Spassky has calculated that the tactical chances gained from the open f-file make up for the drawback of exchanging an f-pawn for an h-pawn.

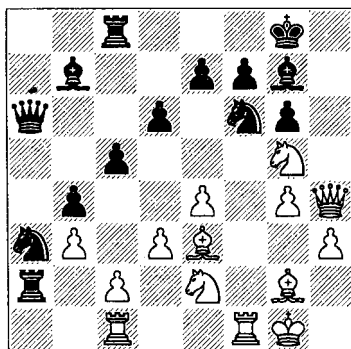
20 ... hxf6

Soviet sources cited by Cafferty in *Candidates' Matches 1968* suggest 20...fxg6 (aiming to defuse White's play on the f-file) 21 ♖f4 ♙c8 22 ♜g5, intending ♜fe6, which is assessed as clearly better for White.

21 ♜g5!

The white knight takes its post in preparation for the kingside siege.

21 ... ♙a3
22 ♖h4 ♙c8 (D)



W

23 ♙xf6!

A standard sacrifice in this type of position. The real point is revealed on move 25.

There's a fair helping of irony in the fact that the black king's bishop, which has already had its prospects lessened by White's 14th and 15th moves, must now consent to being buried behind its own pawns.

23 ... exf6
24 ♖h7+ ♙f8

25 ♜xf7! ♙xc2

The automatic 25...♙xf7 allows White to crash through after the continuation 26 ♙h6 ♙g8 27 ♜f4 ♙xc2 (or 27...d5 28 exd5 f5 29 ♜e6 +- – Evans) 28 ♙f1 with a winning attack – Soviet sources cited in *Candidates' Matches 1968*. The same Soviet sources indicate that 26 ♜f4 also yields a winning attack.

26 ♙h6 ♙xc1+

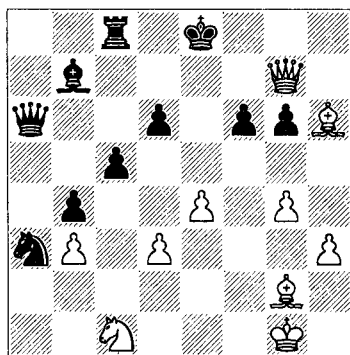
White wins after 26...♙xe2 27 ♖xg7+ ♙e8 28 ♜g5 fxg5 29 ♙xg5 – Soviet sources.

27 ♜xc1 ♙xf7

Or 27...♙xh6 28 ♜xh6 ♙e8 29 ♜g8 (or 29 ♖xg6+ ♙d7 30 ♖f7+ ♙c6 31 e5+ wins – Evans) 29...♙f8 30 ♜e7 +- – Soviet sources.

28 ♖xg7+ ♙e8 (D)

Black loses after 28...♙e6 29 g5 fxg5 30 ♙xg5 ♙e8 31 h4 or 31 ♖xg6+ – Soviet sources.



W

29 g5

White also wins after 29 e5!, hitting the bishop and threatening 30 e6 – Mayer.

29 ... f5
 30 ♖xg6+ ♔d7
 31 ♖f7+ ♔c6
 32 exf5+ 1-0

The pawns are unstoppable after 32...♔b6 33 ♖xb7+ ♖xb7 34 ♔xb7 ♔xb7 35 f6.

Spassky's method of 'clearing the diagonal' is now an accepted part of opening and middlegame theory in many different types of positions. In particular, it is an approach that can cause Black great difficulty in the Benko Gambit when White is successful in implementing it.

G. Kuzmin – Stein

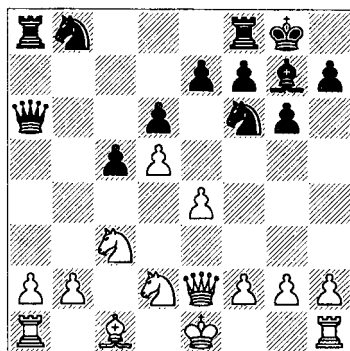
USSR 1972

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6
 5 bxa6 g6 6 ♘c3 ♙xa6 7 ♘f3 ♙g7
 8 ♘d2 d6 9 e4 ♖a5 10 ♙xa6 ♖xa6
 11 ♖e2 0-0 (D)

In the Benko Gambit, Black is not particularly concerned if the queens should go off, as his compensation is positional, i.e., pressure on the white queenside. His king's bishop, supplemented by the heavy pieces, typically plays an important part in this pressure.

12 ♘b5!

Kuzmin plays ambitiously. He plugs the b-file and aims for the



W

arrangement knights on b5 and c4, pawns on a4 and b3. This will dampen Black's queenside play, as the knights will protect things while the pawns will be shifted off the colour of Black's bishop. It's true that b3 will be weak, but the knight at b5 will shield it, while the a-pawn will be a protected passed pawn.

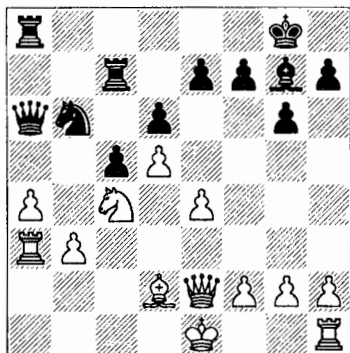
12 ... ♘bd7
 13 a4 ♖fc8

Aiming to create play with ...c4, but this chance never materializes.

14 ♘c4 ♘e8
 15 ♖a3

This is a useful precaution against any tactics based on capturing at b5 and then taking the loose rook at a1. Further, the rook is evacuated from the long diagonal, thus making Black's bishop less powerful, as it will soon lack any targets. This position is evaluated as somewhat better for White by Kotov in *Informator 14*.

- 15 ... ♖c7
 16 ♖xc7 ♗xc7
 17 ♙d2 ♖b6
 18 b3 (D)



B

While Black managed to exchange off the knight at b5, he has not been able to prevent White from completing the rest of his 'ideal arrangement' described in the note to White's 12th move. Black retains practical chances, but he is being outplayed and must be careful that things don't get any worse.

- 18 ... ♖b7?

A mistake that allows White to gain time, simplify the position and improve the placement of his pieces.

- 19 ♖a5 ♗c7
 20 ♗xa6 ♗xa6
 21 ♙e2!

Kuzmin adds the advantage of the better-placed king to his trophy collection. Of course, he must still

be careful that Stein doesn't manage to break into the position with his rooks, as then the king could prove a juicy target, particularly if Black's bishop were to set up shop at d4. Kotov gives a clear advantage to White in this position.

- 21 ... c4

A typical Benko Gambit move by which Black hopes to fracture White's queenside pawns and renew his pressure.

- 22 ♖c6! cxb3

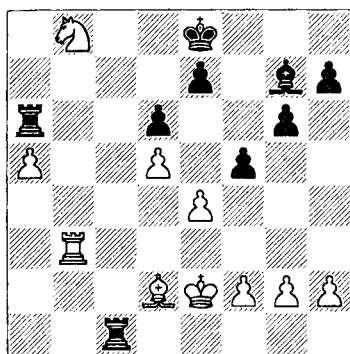
With White's knight now plugging the c-file, it would be foolish to play 22...c3, as the pawn would eventually be surrounded and absorbed, leaving White up two healthy pawns.

- 23 ♗xb3 f5
 24 a5! ♖d7
 25 ♗c1! ♙f8
 26 ♖b8! ♗xc1?!

Stein admits that his position is hopeless and aims for salvation in a piece-down ending. The alternative was 26...♗aa7 27 ♗xc7 ♗xc7 28 ♖xd7+ ♗xd7 29 ♙e3 +-, followed by pushing the a-pawn – Kotov.

- 27 ♖xd7+ ♙e8
 28 ♖b8! (D)

This consolidates the extra piece. Stein presumably hoped to run White out of pawns, but he doesn't come close and the rest of the game requires no comment: 28...♗xa5 29 ♙xa5 fxe4 30 ♖c6 g5 31 ♙d2 ♗c2 32 ♖b4 ♗c5 33



B

♖xg5 ♔f7 34 ♙d2 e6 35 dxe6+
 ♚xe6 36 f3 d5 37 fxe4 dxe4 38
 ♜h3 h5 39 ♜h4 ♜e5 40 ♘c2 ♙f6
 41 ♜f4 1-0

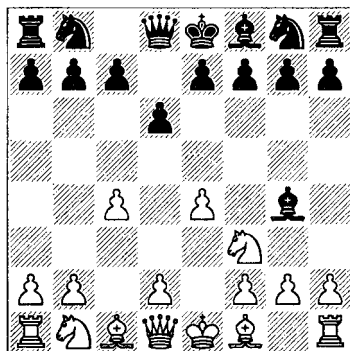
Verdict: Like the over-rated knight, the over-rated bishop is objectively well placed but is subjectively misevaluated. The trait most common to over-rated bishops is that of being on an open diagonal with no accessible targets.

9 Changing the Colour of a Bishop

Beginning chessplayers soon realize that a knight has the potential to reach every square on the board, while a particular bishop has the potential to reach only half of the 64 squares. Indeed, this is the biggest problem facing a single bishop. However, it's possible to use a bishop to influence events on the colour opposite it – by pinning or exchanging it off for a knight! This process can be seen as 'changing the colour of a bishop'.

Korchnoi – Topalov
Vienna 1996

1 ♖f3 d6 2 c4 ♙g4 3 e4?! (D)



B

A very odd move. It could be that Topalov's second move is premature, as the central pawn structure isn't set yet. With the text, Korchnoi deliberately weakens d4 and practically begs Topalov to give him the bishop pair. Yet didn't Black's second move suggest that he was willing to part with the bishops even without such a major concession from White?

3 ... c5
4 ♘c3 ♙xf3

This is also an odd move, because there was no good way for White to avoid this 'changing colour' exchange. It seems better to play 4...♘c6 and wait to see if White would accommodate Black further by playing h2-h3 at some point.

5 ♙xf3 ♘c6
6 d3 g6
7 g3 ♙g7
8 ♙g2 e6!

A deployment seen frequently in this type of position. Black's king's bishop will work on the long diagonal, while his king's knight may later manoeuvre to the hole at d4.

- 9 0-0 ♖ge7
10 ♖e3 0-0
11 ♔e2

The white queen clears the way for the subsequent advance of the f-pawn.

- 11 ... ♖b8
12 ♔d2 ♖d4
13 ♖h1 ♖ec6
14 f4

It was also possible to exchange off Black's king's bishop with 14 ♖h6, but Black's king position would remain reasonably safe, while White would then have one less minor piece capable of fighting for control of d4.

- 14 ... f5!

Another typical move; now White's queen's bishop remains locked behind the pawn at f4.

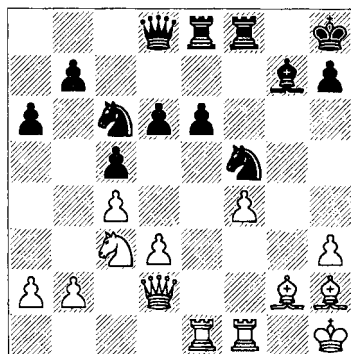
- 15 ♖ae1 ♔a5
16 ♖g1 ♖h8
17 h3 a6
18 g4 ♖be8

Topalov centralizes his rooks and waits to see how Korchnoi resolves the central tension.

- 19 ♖h2 ♔d8
20 exf5 gxf5
21 gxf5 ♖xf5 (D)

White's exchanges have opened his bishop's diagonal and the e4-square, but Black now has the better pawn structure and chances of later playing a knight into g3 or h4.

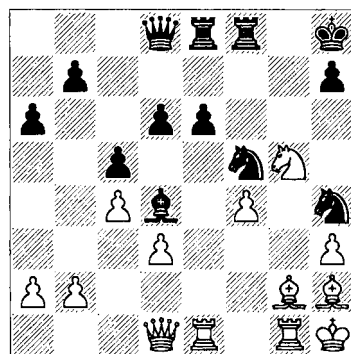
- 22 ♖e4 ♖cd4
23 ♔d1 ♖h4
24 ♖g1 ♖df5



W

- 25 ♖g5 ♖d4!? (D)

Topalov decides that the time is right to 'finish off' Korchnoi with tactics, but this move strikes me as too ambitious. Simply 25...♔d7 (defending both e6 and h7) would have kept Black's advantage.



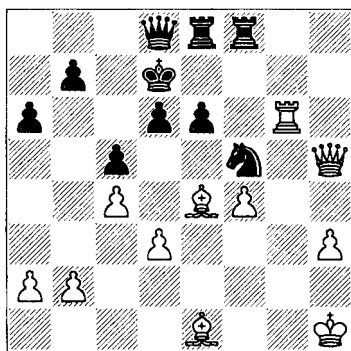
W

- 26 ♖xh7!?

Korchnoi launches an obscure attack that takes all of Topalov's defensive skills to meet. Yet it seems to me that a better approach

was 26 $\text{c}6$! (26 $\text{g}f1$? $\text{c}xg2$ –+) 26... $\text{f}xe6$ 27 $\text{f}xe6$ $\text{c}xg1$ 28 $\text{c}xg1$ $\text{g}g8$ 29 $\text{e}e2$ and White seems on the verge of unravelling – Mayer.

26 ...	$\text{c}xh7$
27 $\text{h}h5+$	$\text{g}g8$
28 $\text{c}c4+$	$\text{g}g7$
29 $\text{f}fxg7+$!	$\text{c}xg7$
30 $\text{g}g1+$	$\text{f}f6$
31 $\text{c}c3$	$\text{c}c6$
32 $\text{c}c1$	$\text{c}c7$
33 $\text{f}fxg6$	$\text{c}d7$ (D)



W

Topalov has managed to save his king, but Korchnoi's play is justified, as he has succeeded in disrupting the flow of the game and can look forward to practical compensation in the form of his bishops.

34 $\text{h}h4$	$\text{c}c8$
35 $\text{f}fxe6$??	

This is tempting, but Korchnoi was undoubtedly in his customary time pressure to have fallen into

such a simple trap. Instead, White should have proceeded more simply with 35 $\text{b}4$, when he can nibble away at Black's king's pawn cover.

35 ...	$\text{f}fxe6$
36 $\text{c}cxf5$	$\text{f}fxf5$
37 $\text{c}cxf5$	$\text{d}d7$!

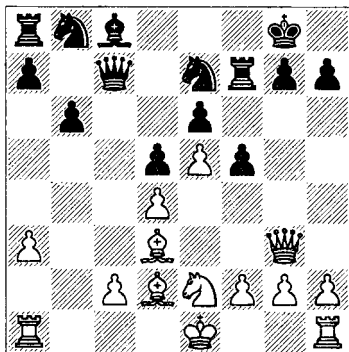
0-1

There's nothing better, as Topalov threatens both the bishop and the win of the queen via ... $\text{f}fe1+$.

It should be noted that a bishop pinning a knight also changes its colour. The entire Winawer French is built around this idea, which serves to strengthen Black's play on the light squares.

Diez del Corral – Petrosian *Palma de Mallorca 1969*

1 $\text{e}4$ $\text{e}6$ 2 $\text{d}4$ $\text{d}5$ 3 $\text{c}c3$ $\text{c}c4$ 4 $\text{e}5$ $\text{c}c5$
5 $\text{a}3$ $\text{c}cxc3+$ 6 $\text{b}bxc3$ $\text{c}c7$ 7 $\text{h}h4$ $\text{f}f5$
8 $\text{g}g3$ $\text{c}cxd4$ 9 $\text{c}cxd4$ $\text{c}c7$ 10 $\text{c}c2$
0-0 11 $\text{c}c3$ $\text{b}b6$ 12 $\text{c}c2$ $\text{f}f7$ (D)



W

A prophylactic defence of g7. In *Informator* 8, Petrosian indicates that White should now respond with 13 h4!. In *ECO C* (First Edition), Ivkov assesses that position as \pm .

13 0-0 ♖a6

The point of Black's play becomes clear. Petrosian has the barrier of pawns on the light squares that is typical of the French Defence, so he aims to exchange off his queen's bishop. After the exchange, Black will be left with two knights, i.e., pieces that can play on light squares, vs a knight and a dark-squared bishop.

14 h4 ♙xd3

15 cxd3!?

This takes away c4 from Black and it is also useful that the c-pawn is no longer backward on an open file. However, Black now has a queenside majority and can aim to exploit the light-square weaknesses at b3 and d3.

15 ... ♘bc6

16 ♖e3 ♙d7

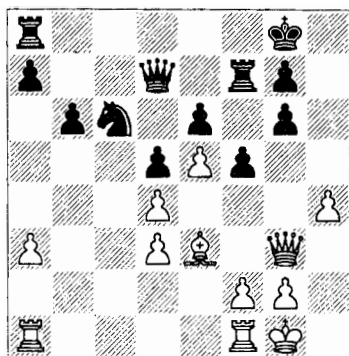
17 ♘f4 ♘g6!?

Petrosian finds a fascinating method of kingside defence. Also feasible was 17...♖c8, when Petrosian considers the position unclear.

18 ♘xg6 hxg6 (D)

19 ♙f4?!

This is a mistake, after which Petrosian has the advantage. There were two alternatives:



W

a) 19 ♙xg6 f4 20 ♖c1 ♘xd4 should be fine for Black – Mayer.

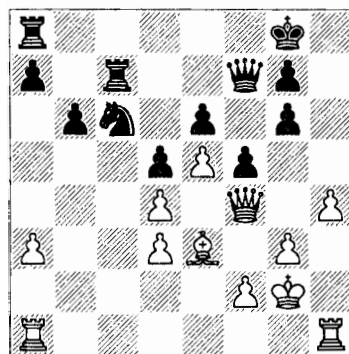
b) 19 ♖ac1 f4 20 ♙xf4 ♘xd4 21 ♖fe1 \pm – Petrosian.

19 ... ♙e8

20 g3 ♖c7

21 ♘g2 ♙f7

22 ♖h1 (D)



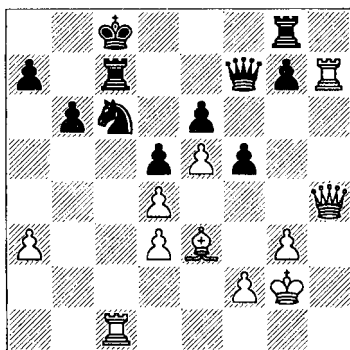
B

22 ... ♙f8!!

Few players have had as good a 'feel for the king' as Petrosian. His kingside is somewhat porous and

White's space advantage might start to mean something after the further h4-h5. With the text-move, Black's king starts a long journey away from the danger zone.

- | | | |
|----|---------|------|
| 23 | ♖g5 | ♔e8 |
| 24 | ♜ac1 | ♔d7 |
| 25 | h5 | gxh5 |
| 26 | ♜xh5 | ♜g8 |
| 27 | ♜h7 | ♔c8 |
| 28 | ♖h4 (D) | |



B

- 28 ... ♖g6

Petrosian marks this as dubious and instead offers '28...♔b7!' without further elaboration. There was also a long forcing sequence that he undoubtedly saw but didn't mention: 28...g5!? 29 ♜xf7 gxh4 30 ♜xc7+ ♔xc7 31 ♜h1 (resolving the tension) 31...hxg3 32 fxg3 ♜g4 33 ♜h4, when Black is better but it is unclear whether he can win – Mayer.

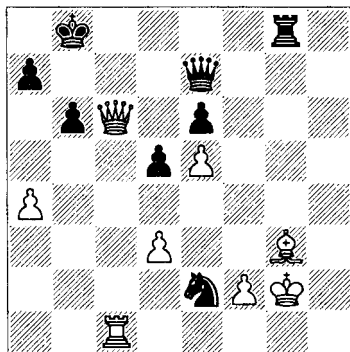
One thing that's impressive about this game is the way White

crashes through on the kingside only to find that the chicken has flown the coop. Although material is still even, Black's positional trumps (better pawn structure and better minor piece) are such that White must find something in the middlegame, as endings are likely to be lost without much of a fight.

- | | | |
|----|-------|------|
| 29 | ♜h8 | ♜xh8 |
| 30 | ♖xh8+ | ♔b7 |
| 31 | ♖f8 | ♜c8 |
| 32 | ♖d6 | ♖e8 |
| 33 | a4 | ♜d8 |
| 34 | ♖a3 | ♖e7 |

Offering an exchange of queens, the better to put the trumps to work in the ending.

- | | | |
|----|------|---------|
| 35 | ♖c3 | ♜c8 |
| 36 | ♔d2 | g5 |
| 37 | ♖c2 | f4! |
| 38 | gxf4 | gxf4 |
| 39 | ♔xf4 | ♜g8+ |
| 40 | ♔g3 | ♜xd4 |
| 41 | ♖c3 | ♜e2 |
| 42 | ♖c6+ | ♔b8 (D) |



W

43 ♖e1

White gives the knight a kick, as 43 ♖d1 ♗g7! is even worse.

43 ... ♜f4+

44 ♕f1 ♜xd3

45 ♖b1 ♗f7!

46 ♗d6+ ♕b7

47 ♕e2 ♖c8!

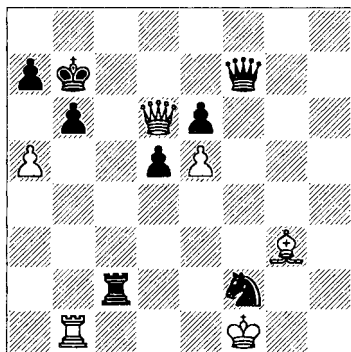
Here and on the next couple of moves the knight is safe from ♗xd3, because then Black plays ... ♗h7+.

48 a5 ♖c2+

49 ♕f1

Alternatives also lose, for example, 49 ♕d1 ♖a2! or 49 ♕e3 ♜xf2! – Petrosian.

49 ... ♜xf2 (D)



W

50 ♖xb6+

White hopes that a perpetual check opportunity will surface, but Black is safe:

50...axb6 51 ♗xb6+ ♕c8 52 ♗a6+ ♕b8 53 ♗b6+ ♗b7 54 ♗d6+ ♗c7 0-1

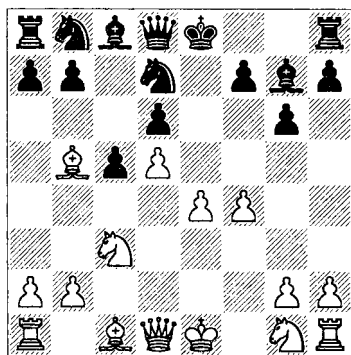
Changing the colour of a bishop is usually done for long-term play of a positional nature, but it can also be used to launch a quick attack.

Kasparov – Nunn

Lucerne Olympiad 1982

1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♜c3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♕g7 8 ♕b5+! ♜fd7 (D)

The variation chosen by Kasparov must be met with care, as both 8... ♕d7 and 8... ♜bd7 allow 9 e5! with great effect.



W

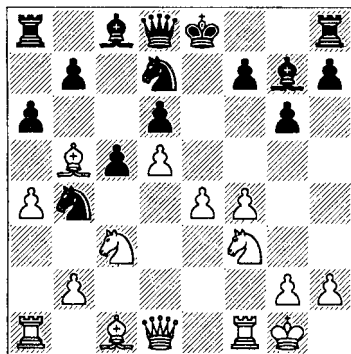
9 a4!

There was a time when White invariably played 9 ♕e2 or 9 ♕d3 so as to get out of the way of Black's queenside majority. However, it was eventually determined that the text is the most flexible move, as White will nearly always want to restrict Black's b-pawn by

a4, while it is not yet clear which square is best for the bishop.

9 ... ♖a6
10 ♖f3 ♖b4
11 0-0 a6? (D)

Nunn puts the question to the bishop. Instead, 11...0-0 12 ♖e1!, clearing f1 for the bishop's retreat, favours White – Kasparov in *The Test of Time*. Nunn had earlier given this as unpleasant for Black in *The Benoni for the Tournament Player*, so the text was an attempt at improving Black's play, hoping to kick back the bishop before the f1-square becomes available.



W

12 ♖xd7+!

Kasparov hits the nail on the head! This exchange, which would fit into the chapter on 'The Unexpected Exchange' equally well, allows White to shift the attack to the dark squares, where he will now have a three to two minor-piece advantage.

12 ... ♖xd7
13 f5!

The point of Kasparov's play. Normally this sort of advance would be considered highly anti-positional, as it makes the e-pawn backward and leaves e5 as a hole. However, in the given position, Nunn is unable to steer a knight to e5, nor is he able to mount any quick pressure on the e-pawn. In the meantime, Kasparov is getting ready to storm the black king position.

13 ... 0-0

Castling into the storm on the kingside. Kasparov considers the following alternatives:

a) 13...gxf5 14 ♖g5 f6 (White is also better after 14...♖f6 15 ♖f4 0-0! 16 e5! – Kasparov) 15 ♖f4 ♖c7 16 ♖d2! 0-0-0 (or 16...♖d3 17 ♖xd6! ♖xd6 18 ♖c4) 17 ♖c4 should make Black very unhappy.

b) 13...c4 (aiming at ...♖d3) 14 ♖g5 ♖b6+ 15 ♖h1 ♖d3 16 f6 ♖f8 17 a5! ♖f2+ 18 ♖xf2 ♖xf2 19 ♖a4 +-, with a winning attack – Kasparov.

14 ♖g5 f6

A nightmarishly ugly move to have to make, but Kasparov comments that 'Black has no way of opposing' White's attack after 14...♖f6 15 ♖d2. He adds that White keeps 'an enormous positional advantage' after the continuation 14...♖d4+ 15 ♖h1 f6 16 ♖h6 ♖e8 17 ♖c1!.

The exchange at move 12 has allowed White to develop an attack that would normally not be effective, as Black would use his additional knight to control e5 and f6.

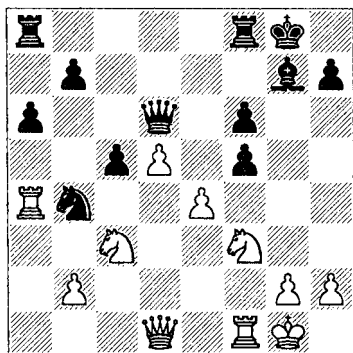
15 ♖f4 gxf5

Another very ugly move. Kasparov recommends 15...♗e7, although he grants that White's game is extremely good after both 16 ♖e1 and 16 fxg6 hxg6 17 ♖h4 ♖h7 18 ♙g3.

16 ♙xd6 ♙xa4

Kasparov remarks that 'things were not essentially changed' by 16...♗e8 17 ♙xc5 fxe4 18 ♖d4 ♖d3 19 ♖xe4! +-. .

17 ♖xa4 ♗xd6 (D)



W

18 ♖h4!

"The knight triumphantly establishes itself at f5, where its value is immediately increased several times over." – Kasparov.

18 ... fxe4

19 ♖f5 ♗d7

"Or 19...♗e5 20 ♗g4 ♖f7 21 ♖h6+" – Kasparov.

20 ♖xe4 ♖h8

Black also loses after 20...♗ae8 21 ♗g4 ♖h8 (21...♗xe4 22 ♖h6+!) 22 ♖xc5 +- – Kasparov.

21 ♖xc5 1-0

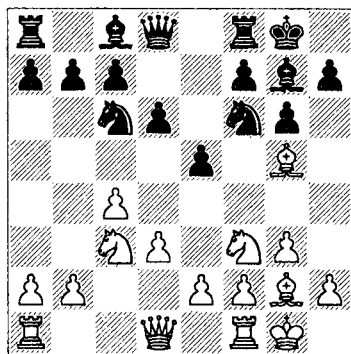
White wins after 21...♗xd5 22 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 23 ♖e6 – Kasparov.

The colour of a bishop can be changed for relatively subtle reasons, as in the following game.

Suba – Farago

Prague Zonal 1985

1 c4 ♖f6 2 ♖c3 e5 3 ♖f3 ♖c6 4 d3 d6 5 g3 g6 6 ♙g2 ♙g7 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♙g5!? (D)



B

White prepares to change the colour of his bishop by exchanging the knight at f6. Suba decides on this course even though Black doesn't have any weaknesses on

the light squares, as his own play is directed toward the central light squares.

8 ...	h6
9 ♖xf6	♗xf6
10 ♜b1	a5
11 a3	♘d4
12 ♘d2	

The exchange 12 ♘xd4?! exd4 is unfavourable for White, as Black could subsequently develop pressure on the e-file. With the text, Suba points his king's knight at the e4-square; his other knight is already leaning on the d5-square.

12 ...	c6
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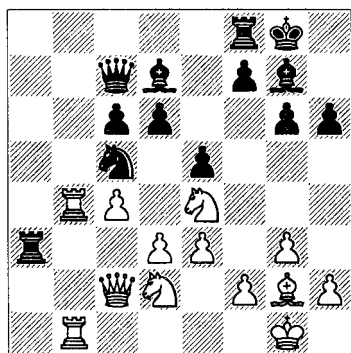
This blocks the long diagonal and takes away d5 from White, but it also presents a target for White's queenside advance.

13 b4	axb4
14 axb4	♗d8
15 e3	♘e6
16 ♗c2	♗c7
17 b5	♙d7

Black overprotects c6, since it is the key to his defence of the light squares. The strategic battle in this game is well-conducted by both sides and White must be careful that Black doesn't manage to demonstrate that his bishops and space advantage on the kingside are more important than White's light-square play and queenside pressure.

18 ♜b4	♘c5
19 ♜fb1	♞a3
20 bxc6	bxc6

21 ♘ce4! (D)



B

21 ...	♞a7?
--------	------

An unfortunate mistake that leaves White significantly better. In *Informator 39*, Suba gives 21...♘xd3! 22 ♜b7 ♗d8 23 ♘b3 (23 ♘xd6? ♘xf2! – Mayer) 23...♙c8! 24 ♜b8 ♘c5 (24...♗c7? 25 ♜xc8) 25 ♘bxc5 dxc5 26 ♜b6 ± as best play for both sides. However, in this line Graham Burgess points out that 24...f5! is far more critical. The point is that Black is ready to secure his knight with ...e4 if the white knight at e4 should move, while 25 ♗xd3 fxe4 followed by 26...♗c7 leaves the white rook at b8 in trouble. Maybe White should try 26 ♙xe4 ♗c7 27 ♜b4, but then 27...c5! 28 ♜b5 ♙a6 nets an exchange for what looks like inadequate compensation.

22 ♘xc5	dxc5
23 ♜b6	f5
24 ♗b3	♗d6

25 ♔f1! ♔h7

Suba gives 25...e4? 26 ♖d1! exd3 27 ♘f3 as clearly better for White.

26 ♖b7 ♖a6

27 ♔h3!

Intending 28 ♘e4.

27 ... ♙c8

28 ♖b8 ♖a7

29 e4!

Stepping up the pressure on the light squares and preparing to create a target at f5.

29 ... ♖af7

30 ♖c2 ♙e6

31 ♖xf8 ♖xf8

32 exf5 gxf5

Now the pawn at f5 is attackable, but 32...♙xf5 33 ♘e4 is clearly better for White – Suba.

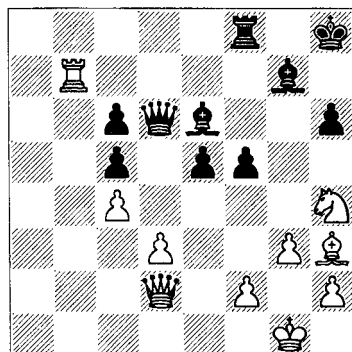
33 ♘f3 ♙f6

34 ♖b7+ ♔h8

35 ♖d2 ♙g7

36 ♘h4 (D)

Suba evaluates the position as winning for White. Black's f5-pawn will eventually fall and even e5 is a target in some variations. The rest of the game is conducted well by White: 36...♙c8 37 ♖b3 ♔h7 38 ♖e2! (the queen heads for h5) 38...♖f6 39 ♖b8 ♙e6 40 ♖xf8



B

♙xf8 41 ♖h5 (the immediate 41 ♖f3 is also winning) 41...f4 (Suba points out that White wins the ending after 41...e4 42 ♙xf5+ ♙xf5 43 ♖xf5+ ♖xf5 44 ♘xf5 exd3 45 ♔f1) 42 ♙xe6 ♖xe6 43 ♖f3 ♖f6 44 ♔g2 ♔g8 45 ♖g4+ ♔f7 46 ♖d7+ ♙e7 47 ♘f5 fxg3 48 fxg3! 1-0

White simply chops everything at e7, brings his king to e4 and wins due to his outside pawn on the kingside.

Verdict: Bishops that change their colour by pins or exchanges against opposing knights can influence events on the colour complex from which they are barred.

10 Increasing the Speed of Your Knights

Every chess player knows that bishops like open positions, while knights prefer closed positions. In general, this is true, but not always. John Watson elucidated an exception in his opening book *Queen's Gambit: Chigorin Defence*:

Given that a game is in the opening or early middlegame stage (i.e. that not too many pieces and pawns have been traded), it tends to be desirable for he who has acquired the two bishops to immediately close the position, and for he who gains the knights to immediately open it.

Watson's point is that it usually takes a certain amount of time to acquire the bishop pair in the opening or early middlegame. Hence, the side with the bishops is likely to fall behind in development, in which case an opening of the game is the last thing to be desired. Long-term, there can be no doubt that the bishop pair will do better in an open position than in a closed position, but the side with the bishop pair must first get developed. Thus, what we might call 'Watson's Rule', which is stated above.

Knights are short-range pieces, which means that they are slow when they try to move across vast expanses of the board. However, if one side surrenders a bishop for a knight, it frequently results in a gain of time, for example, the side that gains the bishops must first move a pawn to provoke the exchange or the side that gives up the bishop may subsequently develop tactical threats that require time loss by the owner of the bishops. The side that yields the bishops can be seen as increasing the speed of his knights, as time hasn't been spent on the bishops, e.g., retreating in response to a pawn attack.

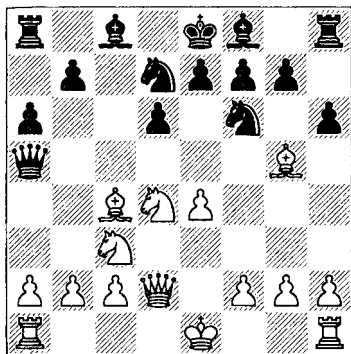
Let's proceed to some examples.

Spassky – Petrosian
Moscow, World Ch match (19)
1969

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
♙xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♙g5 ♘bd7
7 ♙c4 ♚a5 8 ♚d2 h6 (D)

Putting the question to the bishop. White decides to increase the speed of his knights.

9 ♙xf6! ♘xf6



W

10 O-O-O e6

This move is the 'normal' approach, but the usual doesn't always apply when things become unusual. In *Informator 7*, Geller prefers 10...e5!? 11 ♖f5 ♗xf5, while he thinks that the text leaves Black in a clearly inferior position.

11 ♖he1 ♗e7

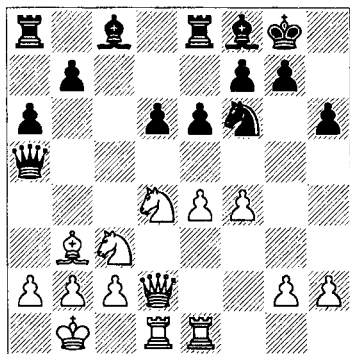
In *ECO B* (Second Edition), Gipslis considers 11...♗d7 12 f4 O-O-O 13 ♗b3 ♖e8 14 f5, which he assesses as clearly better for White.

12 f4 O-O**13 ♗b3 ♖e8**

Petrosian prepares to overprotect e6, as he must always be ready to contend with f4-f5, aiming to soften up Black on the a2-g8 diagonal and open the f-file.

14 ♖b1 ♗f8 (D)**15 g4!**

Spassky has completed his development, centralized his pieces and made some moves to get his house in order (for example, 13



W

♗b3 and 14 ♖b1). Black is certainly behind in development and has had to play some passive moves to defend against White's intentions, but with enough delay, he could hope to start putting his positional trumps (bishop pair, centre pawns, queenside initiative) to work. Spassky has timed his attack well and now heads for the king.

15 ... ♖xg4

This looks exceedingly dangerous, but Geller gives 15...♖d7 16 g5 ♖c5 17 h4 as clearly better for White.

16 ♖g2 ♖f6

In *Spassky's 100 Best Games*, Cafferty mentions 16...e5 17 ♖f5 'with strong threats'.

17 ♖g1 ♗d7

Black must be alert for White breaking with either f4-f5 or e4-e5. Averbakh suggests 17...♖c5, but then Cafferty gives 18 ♖f3 ♗d7 19 e5! as very good for White.

18 f5 ♖h8

Cafferty gives 18...e5 'or even 18...exf5' as considerably better than the text.

19 ♖df1

Gipslis assesses this position as clearly better for White.

19 ... ♔d8

Yet another point where Petrosian could have defended better. Geller gives 19...e5 20 ♖e6! fxe6 21 fxe6 ♙xe6 22 ♖xf6+ – as hopeless, but he considers 19...♙e5 ('!' – Geller) to be clearly better, but not decisive for White. Cafferty continues this with 20 ♖f3 ♙c5 (20...♙f4 21 ♙h3) 21 h4, intending 22 ♖g5 or ♖d1-e3.

Cafferty independently considers 19...xf5 20 ♖xf5 ♙xf5 21 ♜xf5 ♚d8 (the immediate 21...♗e5!? allows 22 ♜xf6! ♔g5 23 ♚xg5 hxg5 24 ♜xf7, which gives White a powerful initiative on the light squares – Mayer) 22 ♙xf7 ♗e5 and concludes that it is superior to the text-move.

20 fxe6 fxe6

Petrosian could have taken the opportunity to remove a pair of minor pieces with 20...♗xe6 21 ♖xe6 fxe6, but then White has two good continuations:

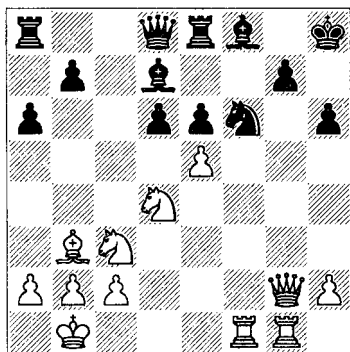
a) 22 ♖e2, when White has strong pressure for his pawn – Caf-ferty.

b) 22 e5 ('! +- - Geller)
22...dxe5 23 ♖e4 ♗h5 24 ♔g6!
♗h4 (24...♙f4 25 ♜xf4 exf4 26 c3,
intending 27 ♙c2 +- - Cafferty)

25 ♖g4 ♜h3 26 ♙c4 ‘with a variety of threats’ – Cafferty.

21 e5! (D)

A clearance sacrifice to open the e4-square for the knight. Cafferty suggests that a slower approach with 21 ♖f3, threatening 22 e5 and 22 ♖h4, also wins.



B

21 ... dxe5
22 e4 h5

Black loses after 22...exd4 (22...♟xe4 23 ♖xf8+) 23 ♟xf6 (threatening 24 ♔g6) 23...g5 24 ♔h3 ♜e7 25 ♜xg5 ♙g7 26 ♜xg7! ♟xg7 27 ♜g1+ and mates – Caf-ferty.

23 ♔g6 exd4

This goes down without a fight. A better try was 23... ♖f4, but then White wins with 24 ♙xf4 exf4 25 ♖f3 (intending 26 ♖e5 or 26 ♖fg5) 25... ♗b6, and White could solve the problem of his exposed rook with Geller's 26 ♙g5!!, with the threats 27 ♖f6 and 27 ♖e5.

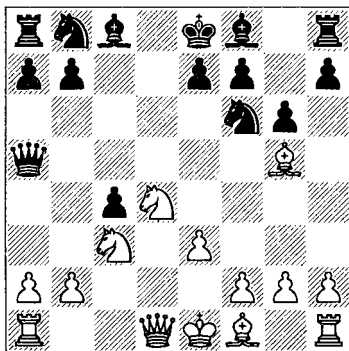
24 ♖g5 1-0

Black loses his queen, since 24...hxg5 25 ♖xh5+ ♔g8 26 ♖f7+ ♔h8 27 ♖f3 mates.

Sometimes, the bishop exchange is made in response to a piece attack on the bishop.

Petrosian – Korchnoi*Curaçao, Candidates'**Tournament 1962*

1 c4 c5 2 ♖f3 ♖f6 3 d4 cxd4 4
 ♖xd4 g6 5 ♖c3 d5!? 6 ♗g5 dxc4
 7 e3 ♖a5? (D)



W

Korchnoi has used an unusual fifth move in the attempt to eliminate White's central space advantage. In fact, he had reached this position twice in the fifties; both times he played 7...♗g7 and won, so it's obscure why he felt the need to innovate here.

8 ♗xf6!

A principled decision to speed up the knights. White surrenders the bishop, but now Black has holes in his position at d4, d5, d6 and f6. White also gains a nice lead in development, which soon translates itself into a crushing attack after some further inaccuracies by Black.

Petrosian's exchange is further justified by the fact that Korchnoi had to violate basic opening principles to provoke the exchange, i.e., by moving the black queen early in the opening.

8 ... exf6
 9 ♗xc4 ♗b4!?

More typical would be 9...♗g7. The intention behind the text-move would seem to be ...♗xc3, which would prevent the c3-knight from reaching the hole at d5, but Korchnoi later blanches and allows the knight to stay on the board.

10 ♖c1 a6
 11 0-0 ♖d7?

This should have resulted in serious problems. In *ECO A* (First Edition), Gipslis gives 11...♗xc3 ± as superior.

12 a3?

A reciprocal mistake. It's surprising that Petrosian didn't jump at the chance to play 12 ♖d5!, when White is simply better.

12 ... ♗e7?

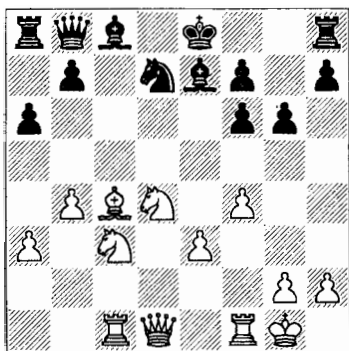
This wasn't a good day for Korchnoi. 12...♗xc3 ± was still indicated.

13 b4! ♖e5

Of course, 13... ♖xa3?? 14 ♘d5 wins for White, as he threatens a fork at c7 and also the trapping of the queen with 15 ♙a1 ♖b2 16 ♙a2.

14 f4! ♖b8 (D)

Black's queen must continue her fast, as 14... ♖xe3+?? 15 ♖h1 and 16 ♙f3 wins the queen.



W

15 ♙xf7+!

A nice sacrifice that cuts Black open on the light squares. Gipslis assesses the position as winning for White.

15 ... ♙xf7
16 ♖b3+ ♙e8
17 ♘d5 ♙d6
18 ♘e6 b5

This doesn't help Black, but neither does 18... ♙f7 19 ♘dc7 ♙xc7 20 ♘xc7+ ♙g7 21 ♖e6! ♘e5 22 ♖e7+ ♘f7 23 ♘xa8 ♖xa8 24 ♙c7 ♙f8 25 ♙d1! and the twin threats of 26 ♙d8! and 26 ♙d6 are decisive – Mayer.

19 ♘dc7+ ♙e7

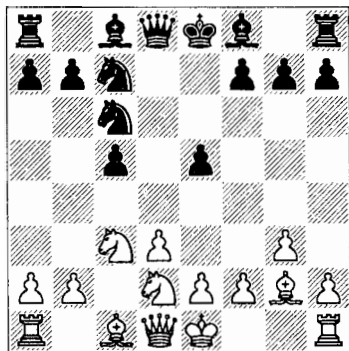
White also wins after 19... ♙xc7 20 ♘xc7+ ♙d8 (seeking shelter behind his own pieces) 21 ♖e6! +-, luring the rook to f8 after, e.g., 21... ♖b6 (or 21... ♖xc7 22 ♙fd1!) 22 ♙c6 ♖xc7 23 ♙d1! and the black position cracks, for example, 23... ♙f8 24 ♙xc7 ♙xc7 25 ♙d6+ ♙b7 (25... ♙d8 26 ♖xf8+) 26 ♙c1 ♙a7 27 ♙c7+ ♙a8 28 ♙xd7 ♙xd7 29 ♖xf8 – Mayer.

20 ♘d4 ♙f8
21 ♘xa8 1-0

The bishop exchange for increased knight speed can also come in response to tempi-losing manoeuvring.

Polugaevsky – Gheorghiu
Palma de Mallorca 1972

1 c4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 g3 ♘c6 6 ♙g2 ♘c7 7 d3 e5 8 ♘d2! (D)



B

The text-move intends to shatter the black pawn structure with 9 Qxc6+! bxc6 10 Qc4 , when practice indicates that White has a comfortable advantage.

Black has established a Maroczy Bind, which is defined by his pawns at e5 and c5 in a position where the c-pawn has been swapped for the d-pawn. This grants Black a space advantage which, given time, he will use to stifle White. The key phrase here is 'given time', for White's lead in development (a temporary advantage) gives him a window of opportunity in which to create counterplay.

8 ... $\text{Qd7!?$

Gheorghiu defends against the positional threat 9 Qxc6+ ; he assumes that he will be able to straighten out his cumbersome development later by fianchettoing the queen's bishop. In *Grandmaster Performance*, Polugaevsky indicates that neither 8... Qd7 nor 8... f6 is significantly better than the text.

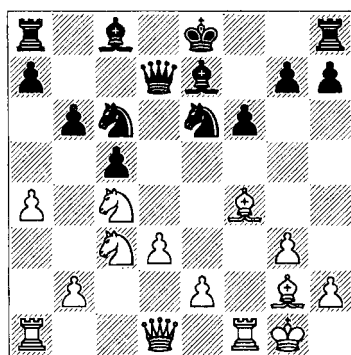
9 0-0 b6
10 Qc4 f6
11 a4!

This discourages Black from playing a later ... Qb7 , because he would have to be worried about the a-pawn playing down to a6. It's true that the text weakens b4, but Black will never have time to exploit this in the present game, as he

must first complete his development.

11 ... Qe7
12 f4! exf4
13 Qxf4 Qe6 (D)

The attempt to develop normally with 13...0-0 loses material to 14 Qxc7 Qxc7 15 Qd5 – Polugaevsky.



W

14 a5!

"By giving up one of his bishops, White makes prompt use of his lead in development. Moreover, he continues playing on both wings, which in principle is always promising for the side with the initiative." – Polugaevsky.

Gheorghiu has lost time with multiple moves of his knight – four, to be exact – so the ensuing exchange at f4 costs him two tempi, as the bishop has only moved once. Polugaevsky's approach circumvents Black's build-up, which was slow but intended

to consolidate a space advantage. By surrendering the bishop pair, Polugaevsky gains a large enough lead in development that Black's space advantage is meaningless, since White's knights and other pieces prove able to gain active play.

14 ... ♖xf4
 15 ♖xf4 ♖b8
 16 axb6 axb6
 17 ♖d5

"Increasing the tempo of the offensive, and not allowing the opponent a respite. After all, White must constantly remember: if Black had, for example, castled, he would be perfectly all right." – Polugaevsky.

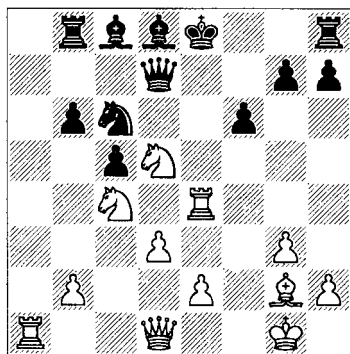
It should be stressed again that Gheorghiu is playing for various long-term (or 'static') advantages, such as space, the better pawn structure and the bishop pair (assuming that the bishops are likely to prove better than the knights). Polugaevsky is using the short-term ('dynamic') advantages inherent in his lead in development and greater piece activity. Given time to consolidate, Black will probably be better, since White's short-term advantages will evaporate. Thus, it is Polugaevsky's task to convert his short-term advantages into some sort of long-term advantage.

17 ... ♔d8

Polugaevsky gives 17...b5 18 ♖cb6 ♖d6 19 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 20 ♖a6

"when Black is bound hand and foot." Indeed, this looks winning; Black can't play 20...0-0 21 ♖xc6!, but the threat in the meantime is 21 ♖e4, winning material.

18 ♖e4+! (D)



B

The rook is now effectively on an open file, despite the fact that it would be on a closed file if it were at e1.

18 ... ♖f7

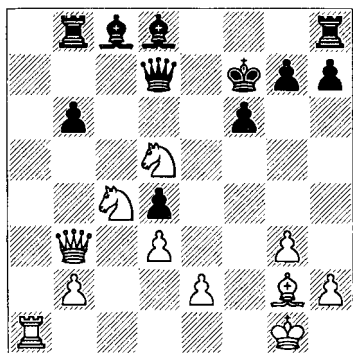
Polugaevsky gives the line 18...♖f8 19 ♖f4 ♖c7 20 ♖e6 ♖d4 21 ♖d5 +-, but I don't see a win after 21...♖f7!, when 22 ♖d6 ♖g4! creates counterplay and 22 ♖e4 calls White's 20th move into question – Mayer.

19 ♖b3! ♖d4

It was better to play 19...♖f8, although Polugaevsky comments that Black would be 'under severe pressure' after 20 ♖b5.

20 ♖xd4 cxd4 (D)

21 ♖b4



W

Polugaevsky gives this move an exclamation mark and comments that 21 Qdxb6 Qg6 or 21... Qe8 would 'sharply reduce' the tempo of White's attack.

In fact, it appears that he missed a pretty win with the thematic 21 Qh3! , when the black position collapses:

a) 21... Qxh3? 22 Qf4 Qh6 (other squares drop the queen at least to a discovered check) 23 Qd6++ mating.

b) 21... Qc6 22 Qb4 Qc7 23 Qxc8 Qxc8 24 Qa6! $+-$, forcing the queen off the rook at c8 – Mayer.

21 ... Qg6

Gheorghiu hopes to escape the centre and later drop the king back to h7. Polugaevsky gives the variation 21... Qe8 22 Qc6 Qb7 23 Qa8 $+-$, but as 22 Qc6 wins the queen, it seems likely that he meant 21... Qf8 .

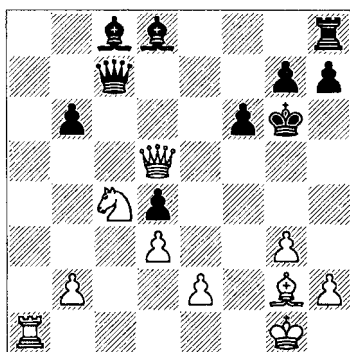
Even assuming he meant 21... Qf8 , White is still winning

after, for example, (22 Qc6 Qb7 23 Qa8) 23... Qc7 24 Qxc8+ Qxc8 25 Qa3+ Qf7 26 Qd5+ $+-$ or 23... Qe7 24 Q4e5! fxe5 25 Qxe5 Qe8 26 Qxc8 Qd8 and now 27 Qxb7 wins the house, while Burgess points out the sadistic 27 Qb4+ Qe7 28 Qc6 .

22 Qc6 Qc7
23 Qxb8 Qxb8
24 Qb5 Qc7

Polugaevsky points out that 24... Qb7 loses to 25 Qxb7 Qxb7 26 Qd6 Qe7 27 Qf5+ Qh6 28 Qh3+ Qg5 29 Qh4+ Qg6 30 Qg4+ Qh6 31 Qf5\# .

25 Qd5 (D)



B

25 ... Qe8

White's position is winning, as the black king is in extreme danger and the knight is ready to play to d6. Polugaevsky examines the alternatives:

a) 25... Qc5 26 Qa8 $+-$ wins material.

b) 25...♙e7 26 ♖f3! threatens 27 ♖h5#. Black is lost in all variations:

b1) 26...f5 27 ♖e5+ ♗f6 28 ♖f7+ ♗xe5 29 ♖xg7+ +-.
 b2) 26...h5 27 ♖f1! ♙c5 28 ♙e4+ ♗h6 29 ♖f5! ♙xf5 30 ♖xf5 ♖f7 31 ♖e5 ♖e8 32 ♖f4+ mates.

b3) 26...♖c5 is relatively best, but White wins the ending after 27 ♖xb6!.

26 ♖d6 ♖e5

White wins after 26...♖xe2 27 ♙e4+ ♖xe4 28 ♖xe4+ f5 29 ♖e8+ +- – Polugaevsky.

27 ♙e4+ ♗h5

28 ♖g8! f5

29 ♖f7 fxe4

30 ♖xh7+ ♗g4

31 ♖f1 ♖f5

Or 31...g5 32 ♗g2, mating with h2-h3 – Polugaevsky.

32 ♖g6+ ♖g5

33 ♖xe4+ ♗h5

34 ♖h7+

An acceptable way to mate, however 34 ♖h4+ ♗g6 35 ♖h8#! would have been more fitting in my view.

34 ... ♗g4

35 ♖h4# (1-0)

Polugaevsky's play in this game was a model of dynamic play and increasing Knight Speed.

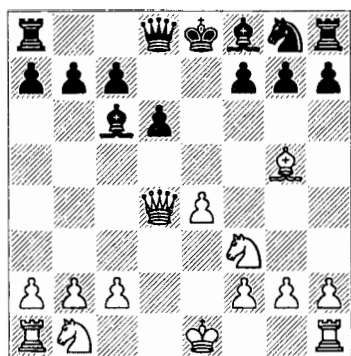
One thing that the player with the speedy knights must be careful about is the risk that surrendering the bishops will lead to a

temporary increase in piece activity, but that the side with the bishops will eventually manage to neutralize the knights' speed, after which the bishops may become the dominant positional feature.

A. Anderssen – L. Paulsen

Vienna 1873

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♖xd4!? ♖c6 5 ♙b5 ♙d7 6 ♙xc6 ♙xc6 7 ♙g5 (D)



B

Anderssen has adopted an approach that allows him to maximize his development at the cost of the bishop pair. Further, he has a nice space advantage in the centre, as his centre pawn is on the fourth rank, while Black's centre pawn is only on the third rank.

7 ... ♖f6

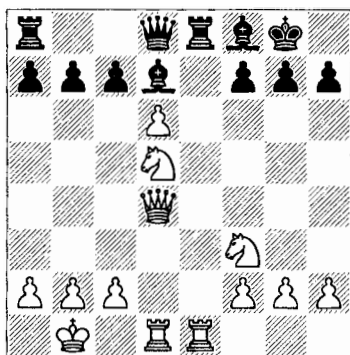
8 ♖c3 ♙e7

9 0-0-0 0-0

10 ♖he1 ♖e8

One difficulty Black faces is that his heavy pieces have trouble operating in the centre. By comparison, White's heavy pieces are placed comfortably on the e- and d-files. This is a result of White's previously mentioned space advantage.

- | | |
|-------------|------|
| 11 ♖b1 | ♙d7 |
| 12 ♙xf6! | ♙xf6 |
| 13 e5 | ♙e7 |
| 14 ♘d5 | ♙f8 |
| 15 exd6 (D) | |



B

- | | |
|--------|-------|
| 15 ... | cx d6 |
|--------|-------|

Black just loses a pawn after 15...♙xd6 16 ♘xc7!.

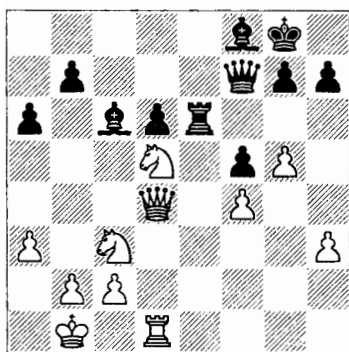
The use of tactics has allowed Anderssen to carve out weaknesses in the black centre, particularly at d6 and d5. This early game is a wonderful example of transforming a dynamic advantage (the lead in development resulting from surrendering the bishop pair) into a static advantage (better pawn structure and good centre squares

for the knights). Anderssen's next move is particularly good; he simplifies and ensures that Paulsen cannot subsequently deflect the white rook from the d-file.

- | | |
|----------|------|
| 16 ♖xe8! | ♙xe8 |
| 17 ♘d2! | |

Anderssen's reputation today is as a dangerous attacker and imaginative tactician. As this game shows, he could also play very sophisticated positional chess. With the text, he starts his knight on a journey to c3, where it will supplement the knight at d5.

- | | |
|------------|-----|
| 17 ... | ♙c6 |
| 18 ♘e4 | f5 |
| 19 ♘ec3 | ♙d7 |
| 20 a3 | ♙f7 |
| 21 h3 | a6 |
| 22 g4 | ♙e8 |
| 23 f4 | ♙e6 |
| 24 g5! (D) | |



B

Paulsen has avoided a pawn storm for the moment, but now

White controls f6 and his threat of advancing the h-pawn down to h6 will soon make matters worse for Black.

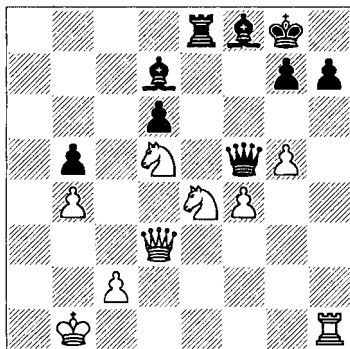
24 ... b5
 25 h4 e8
 26 d3 b8
 27 h5 a5
 28 b4!

Another strong move. Anderssen prevents any speculative attacks based on the pawn sacrifice ...b5-b4, while also guaranteeing that the pawn at b5 will be a fixed weakness in any endgame that arises.

28 ... axb4
 29 axb4 xh5
 30 xxf5 xf7
 31 d3 d7

Paulsen prevented the white h-pawn from coming down to h6, but he has had to yield a half-open h-file and give White a potentially mobile f-pawn.

32 e4 xf5
 33 h1 e8 (D)



W

34 e6+! gxf6
 35 xf6+ f7
 36 xh7+ g7
 37 xg7+! xg7
 38 xe8+ f8
 39 xf5+ xf5
 40 xd6 1-0

Unfortunately, I don't have access to primary sources with respect to this game. In *Masters of the Chessboard*, Réti indicates that Black resigned here, but some database sources suggest that Black played on for a while with 40...d7 41 e4 g7 42 g3 f7 43 f5 e7 44 c1 d6 45 g6 e8 46 d2 d5 47 d3 e5 48 e3 d5 49 f4 c4 50 e4 xb4 51 d6 c6 52 f6 c3 53 xb5+ xb5 54 f7 before resigning.

It is rather unusual for Black to adopt a strategy by which he yields the bishops for increased knight speed. This isn't surprising, since knight speed is a dynamic feature of a position rooted in time (tempo). Just as there are very few reasonable opening gambits for Black, there are few cases where he yields the bishops for the specific reason of increased knight speed. Many of the cases where Black does play for increased knight speed arise out of the Nimzo-Indian, where Black has an intrinsic possibility of gaining a lead in development, as he is busy developing his kingside, while White's early development is on the

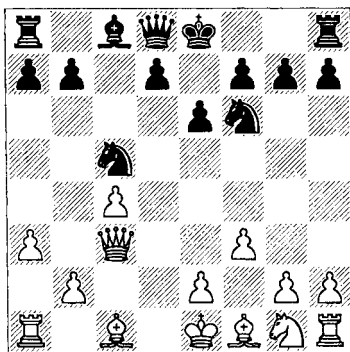
queenside. As a result, White can never castle kingside before move seven, which presents a built-in window of opportunity for Black to catch White's king in the centre.

Miles – de Firmian

Manila Interzonal 1990

1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 ♚c2 c5 5 dxc5 ♘a6 6 a3 ♙xc3+ 7 ♚xc3 ♘xc5 8 f3 (D)

White can also try 8 b4 ♘ce4 9 ♚d4 d5 10 c5!?, when the knight at e4 is short on squares. This variation is extremely sharp and was particularly topical at the time of Miles-de Firmian.



B

8 ... d5
9 cxd5 b6!?
10 b4

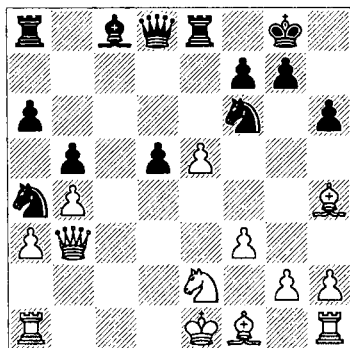
In *New Ideas in the Nimzo-Indian Defence*, Kosten indicates that 10 ♙g5!? is probably superior to the text.

In *Informator 49*, de Firmian and Fedorowicz give both 10 dxe6? ♙xe6 and 10 e4 exd5 as favourable for Black.

10 ... ♘a4
11 ♚b3 b5
12 e4 a6
13 ♘e2 0-0
14 ♙g5 h6
15 ♙h4

Black's lead in development and active piece play give him compensation for the pawn after 15 ♙xf6 ♚xf6.

15 ... exd5
16 e5!? ♙e8! (D)



W

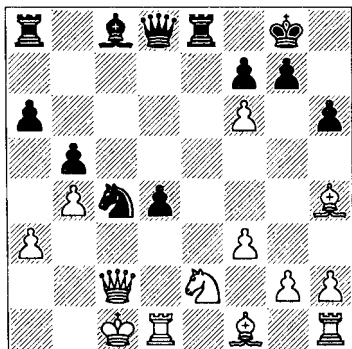
Black has such a large lead in development that he is able to offer a speculative piece sacrifice with the intent of catching the white king in the centre. The alternative was 16...g5 17 ♙f2, which is assessed as clearly better for White by de Firmian and Fedorowicz.

17 f4

Awarded an exclamation mark by Ftačnik in *New in Chess* no. 6, 1990, while de Firmian and Fedorowicz mark it with '!'. It's clear that 17 exf6 d4 gives Black a strong attack in return for his piece, but it is not clear if it is adequate:

a) de Firmian and Fedorowicz consider only 18 ♖d1 ♙e6 19 ♗b1 (19 ♗d3? ♜b2 20 ♗xd4 ♜xd1 wins for Black – de Firmian and Fedorowicz) 19...♙c4 gives Black a strong (possibly winning) attack for the piece.

b) Ftačnik examines 18 ♗d3 ♜b2 19 ♗c2 ♜c4, and now rather than Ftačnik's 20 ♖d1 ♜e3, which he assesses as giving Black a strong initiative, White can try 20 0-0-0!? (D), with the point that 20...♜e3 21 ♖xd4! favours White – Mayer.



B

However, when I mentioned the above possibility to Fedorowicz in 1997, he pointed out that Black

has other options, e.g., 20...a5!? or 20...♗b6!?, among other tries. In any event, his take on the position was that White's exposed king position should give Black enduring compensation for his piece and it was clear that he favoured Black's practical chances.

The critical continuation is clearly 17 exf6; to date, I don't think the published analysis on it is exhaustive, perhaps since de Firmian and Fedorowicz felt that this position could arise again in one of their games.

17 ... g5

18 ♙f2

de Firmian and Fedorowicz assess both 18 fxg5 ♜e4 and 18 exf6 ♗xf6 19 ♖d1 gxf4 20 ♙f2 as clearly better for Black.

18 ... ♜e4

19 ♙d4 ♙e6

20 ♗f3 ♖c8

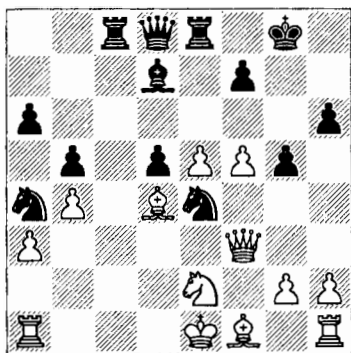
This move passes without comment from de Firmian and Fedorowicz, but Ftačnik gives it a dubious mark. Instead, he prefers 20...f5 21 exf6 g4 22 ♗e3 ♜xf6 23 f5 ♙xf5, but now rather than 24 ♗xh6 ♙f7 (unclear – Ftačnik), it seems to me that White can win a piece with 24 ♗f4!, when the exposed position of White's king is offset by the even more airy position of the black king.

21 f5!

Miles goes for broke. de Firmian and Fedorowicz give 21 ♜g3 gxf4

(21...f5 22 ♔d3 is unclear – Ftačnik) 22 ♖xf4 ♗g5 23 ♗xg5+ hxg5 24 ♔d3 ♖ac3 25 0-0 ♖xg3 26 hxg3 ♗e4 27 ♔xe4 as equal.

21 ... ♔d7 (D)



W

22 ♖g3?

A mistake that allows a very imaginative sacrifice. The position is extremely complicated, but apparently equal with best play:

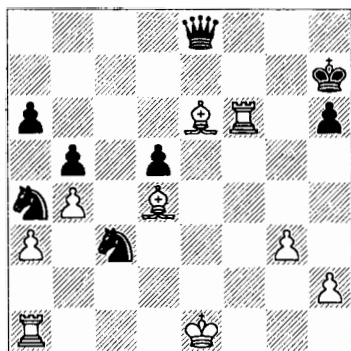
a) 22 ♖h5 ♔xf5 23 ♖xh6 ♗e6 – Ftačnik.

b) 22 e6 with the idea of shutting the e-file:

b1) 22...♔xe6 was apparently de Firmian's intention, when he expected 23 fxe6 ♗xe6 24 g3 ♖ac3 25 ♔h3 ♖d2, which is assessed as unclear by de Firmian and Fedorowicz. A likely continuation is 26 ♖xd2 ♗xe2+ 27 ♖d3, when White intends to seal the c-file with 28 ♔c5. It's also possible to try 27 ♖xe2?! ♖xe2 28 ♖xe2, but then 28...♗e8+! looks favourable for

Black, as he's able to penetrate on the e-file with his queen.

Ftačnik cites analysis by Miles that sees Black take a different approach in the above variation, i.e., 24...♗c2 25 ♔h3 g4 (25...♗e7 26 0-0 +– finally sees the king castle into safety) 26 ♔xg4 ♗xe2+ 27 ♖xe2 ♖ec3 28 ♖xe6 fxe6 29 ♔xe6+ ♖h7 30 ♗f1 ♗e8 31 ♗f7+ ♖g6 32 ♗f6+ ♖h7 (D).



W

At this point, Ftačnik claims that Miles gives '33 ♖f1, intending 34 ♗f1' (perhaps a typo for 34 ♗e1 or 34 ♗f7+ which are indeed both strong threats). Of course, this is doubly garbled, since 33 g4! grabs control of the h5-square and threatens to mate with 34 ♗f7+ ♖g6 35 ♗g7#.

However, when I spoke with Fedorowicz years after the game, he was of the opinion that de Firmian probably would have played the drawing line in 'b2' below.

b2) Black can achieve an equal position with 22...fxe6 23 ♖h5 (23 f6 ♜f8! is clearly better for Black – Ftačnik) 23...e5 (forced) 24 ♖g6+, when de Firmian and Fedorowicz indicate that White should take the perpetual check. Ftačnik analyses further with 24...♔f8 25 ♖xh6+ ♔g8, but now his claim that 26 h4 is unclear is proved wrong by 26...♜c6! – Mayer.

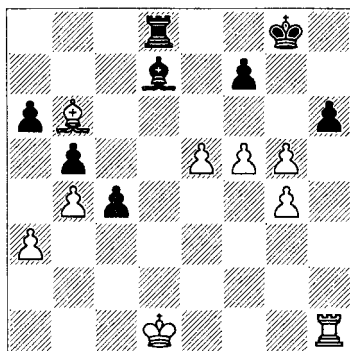
c) 22 h4!? is the really interesting line:

c1) 22...gxh4? 23 f6! is practically winning for Black – Ftačnik.

c2) 22...♖c7 (!?) – Ftačnik; also possible is 22...♜c2!?, which Fedorowicz considers playable – I agree) 23 hxg5 ♖c2 24 ♜d1 ♘ac3 25 ♘xc3 ♘xc3 26 ♙d3 (! – Ftačnik; also possible is 26 gxh6 ♙xf5 – Mayer) 26...♖xd1+ 27 ♖xd1 ♘xd1 28 ♙xd1 ♜c4 (Black loses after 28...hxg5 29 e6 fxe6 30 ♜h8+ ♔f7 31 ♜h7+ – Ftačnik) 29 ♙xc4 dxc4 30 g4 ♜d8 (inferior is 30...♙c6 31 ♜xh6 ♜d8 32 ♜d6 – Ftačnik), and now Ftačnik gives 31 ♜xh6 ♙xf5 as somewhat better for White. However, 31 ♙b6! (D) looks stronger here.

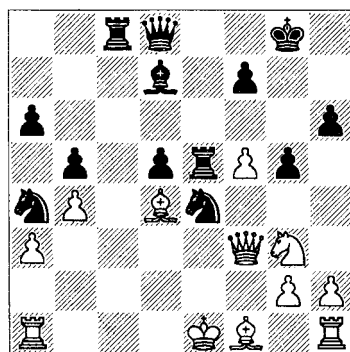
Then 31...♙c6+ 32 ♙xd8 ♙xh1 33 ♔e2 is good for White – Mayer.

As one can see from these variations, the position is very complicated and Miles lost in part because he played for the win and in part because he failed to play the critical 22 h4!?.



B

22 ... ♜xe5!! (D)



W

de Firmian uncorks a wonderful sacrifice to complement his earlier aggressive play. The skin of centre pawns is torn away and the white king is exposed to whatever the black pieces can inflict upon him.

23 ♙e2

de Firmian and Fedorowicz only give 23 ♙xe5 ♖e8, which they assess as clearly better for Black. Ftačnik continues the analysis and

confirms the view that Black is doing very well:

a) 24 ♖d1 ♜xe5 25 ♜e3 (25 ♜xe4 dxe4 transposes to the next note) 25...♞c3 and then 26 ♙d3 ♜b2 or 26 ♞d3 ♞xd3 27 ♙xd3 ♜a1+ makes Black happy – Ftačnik.

b) 24 ♜xe4 ♜xe5 25 ♞d1 dxe4 (25...♜c3 is also very good for Black according to Ftačnik) 26 ♜e3 ♙xf5 is clearly better for Black – Ftačnik.

23 ... ♜e8

24 ♜h5

Black still does very well after 24 ♙xe5 ♜xe5 25 ♞d1 ♞c3 or 24 ♞d1 ♜ac3 25 ♞c1 ♜xg3 26 ♙xe5 ♜gxe2 – Ftačnik.

24 ... ♞xf5

25 ♜e3 ♞c3!

Ftačnik analyses the active 25...♞c2 to an unclear position.

26 ♙xc3 ♜axc3 (D)

27 ♙g4

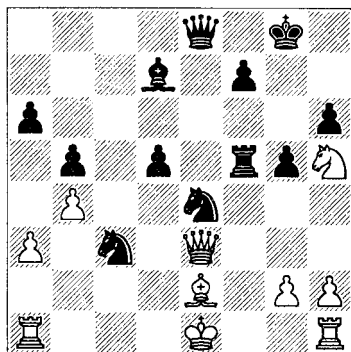
White loses after 27 ♞f1 (27 ♜d4 f6) 27...♞e5 28 ♞c1 ♜xe2 29 ♜xe2 ♜c3 30 ♜f6+ ♜h8 31 ♜xe8 ♞xe2# – Ftačnik.

27 ... d4!

28 ♜xd4 ♜c5+!

29 ♜d2 ♜b3+

30 ♜xc3 ♜xd4



W

31 ♙xf5 ♜e3+

32 ♙d3 ♜e2+

33 ♜c2 ♙f5

34 ♞ad1 ♜e5

35 ♜d2

Black also wins after 35 ♙xf5 ♜c3+ 36 ♜b1 ♜b3+ 37 ♜a1 ♜xa3+ 38 ♜b1 ♜xb4+ 39 ♜a1 ♜a3+ 40 ♜b1 ♜c3+ 41 ♜c2 ♜xd1 42 ♞xd1 ♜c5+ – de Firmian and Fedorowicz.

35 ... ♜b2+

36 ♜e3 ♙g4

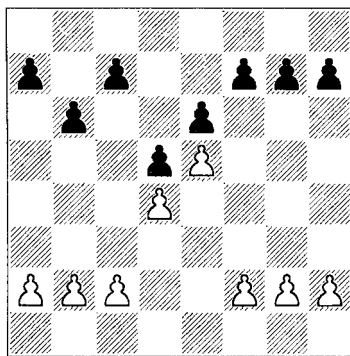
37 ♞d2 ♜d4#

(0-1)

Verdict: Increasing the speed of your knights is a dynamic operation in which a bishop or both bishops are exchanged against knights so as gain time.

11 The Bad Bishop

Bishops must always contend with their own pawns getting in their way. Having at least one bishop cramped or otherwise hindered is usually unavoidable, as pawns do tend to get set into bishop-blocking pawn chains. When a bishop is sufficiently hampered by its own pawns that one takes special note of it in evaluating a position, it earns the label 'bad bishop'. However, there is a great distinction to be made between bad bishops that are 'outside the pawn chain' and those that are 'behind the pawn chain'.



A look at the pawn structure in the above diagram doesn't tell us much about Black's queen's bishop. We must also know where it is located; at c8, b7 or d7, it will be behind the pawn-chain and will be a

matter of some concern. On the other hand, if it is on the b1-h7 diagonal or if it managed to exchange itself via a6 or by playing to g4, then Black may have a very comfortable game. At the least, he won't have to worry about a bad bishop.

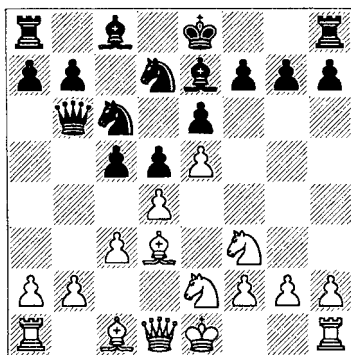
Some openings, e.g., the French or the King's Indian, lend themselves to the topic of bad bishops in a particularly instructive manner. These are openings in which Black practically always has a bad bishop to worry about. Sometimes the bishop is not a very important factor, while at other times it is obvious to even the weakest or most inexperienced player that the bad bishop is a disgrace.

The following game could never be played among modern grandmasters, but the extreme plight of Black's queen's bishop is still a common sight among amateur players today.

Tarrasch – von Gottschall *Dresden 1892*

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 ♘f6 4 e5
 ♘fd7 5 ♙d3 c5 6 c3 ♘c6 7 ♘e2
 ♚b6 8 ♘f3 ♙e7? (D)

The correct approach is 8...cxd4! 9 cxd4 f6!, when Black has an open file for counterplay and is about to open another.



W

von Gottschall prefers to develop his kingside and castle, but this approach, so suited to an open game, is inappropriate here, as it leaves Black cramped and without active chances.

9 0-0 0-0

10 ♘f4!

With Black eschewing the break ...f6, White owns the dark squares on the kingside. Here he's getting ready to play his knight to h5 as an aid to a kingside attack.

10 ... ♔h8

11 ♙c2 ♚g8

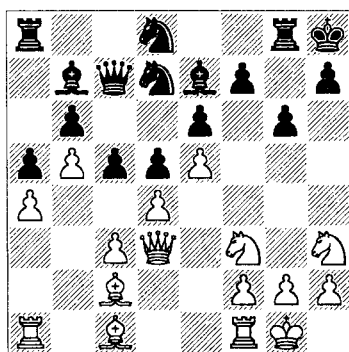
12 ♚d3 g6

Now Black's kingside dark squares are a mess. It was better to play 12...♘f8, which at least does not create any permanent weaknesses.

13 a3 ♚c7?

Under no circumstances should White have been allowed to play b2-b4, as he will now be in a position to neutralize any potential black counterplay in that sector. Correct was 13...c4, followed eventually by a queenside pawn advance.

14 b4 b6
15 ♘h3 a5
16 b5 ♘d8
17 a4 ♙b7 (D)



W

Black is strategically lost, because White can build up for a breakthrough on the kingside and Black can neither prevent it nor distract White with counterplay. Note that, in addition to Black's awful queen's bishop, he is also saddled with a problem knight at d8 and even the knight at d7 has trouble getting activated.

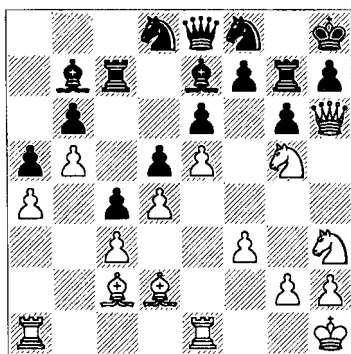
18 ♙d2 ♚c8

19 ♚fc1 ♙g7

20 ♖e3 ♔h8
21 ♙d3 c4

With the queenside closed, there is absolutely no chance of distracting White. If there were a way to seal the kingside, then Black might be able to angle for a blockaded position that would be difficult for White to crack, but as matters stand, White will always be able to keep the kingside at least semi-open.

22 ♙c2 ♘f8
23 ♖e2 ♔g7
24 ♖e3 ♔h8
25 ♙e1 ♖d7
26 ♔h1 ♙c7
27 ♖h6 ♖e8
28 ♘fg5 ♙g7
29 f3! (D)



B

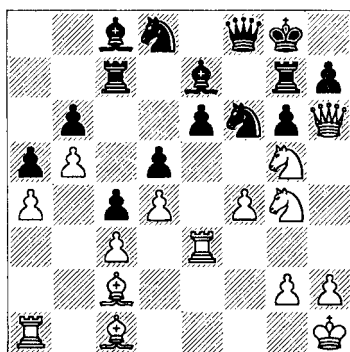
Preparing to bring the knight to g4, where it will intensify White's pressure on the dark squares.

29 ... ♙c8
30 ♘f2 ♘d7
31 ♘g4 ♖g8

32 ♙c1 ♖f8
33 f4

Clears the third rank for a rook lift and may also allow a later breakthrough based on g2-g4 and f4-f5.

33 ... ♔g8
34 ♙e3 f5
35 exf6 ♘xf6 (D)



W

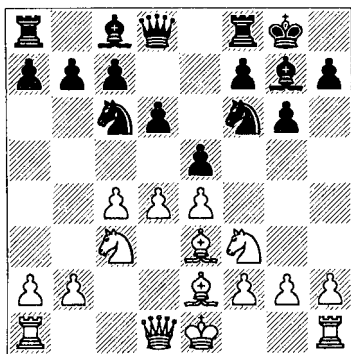
Black has finally achieved the exchange of his f-pawn for the e-pawn, but it comes 25 moves too late. White is able to build up his kingside attack and Black can do little but watch in horror: 36 ♘e5 ♙d6 37 ♙f3 ♖e8 38 ♙d2 ♙xe5 39 fxe5 ♘g4 40 ♖h4 h5 41 h3 ♘h6 42 g4 hxg4 43 hxg4 ♘df7 44 ♔g2 ♘f5 45 gxf5 gxf5 46 ♙g3 ♘xg5 47 ♙xg5 ♖f7 48 ♙h1 1-0

It is fitting that the variation employed by Tarrasch in this game (3 ♘d2) bears his name today. He won many games with it, several of which were similar to this game.

von Gottschall was hampered by the fact that the methods of solving Black's problems in the position after White's move eight are relatively sophisticated and had yet to be worked out systematically. A modern master sits down at the board well-versed in how to create counterplay, but sometimes these methods only make the situation worse.

Polugaevsky – Am. Rodriguez
Toluca Interzonal 1982

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♙g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♙e2 0-0 6 ♘f3 e5 7 ♙e3 ♘c6?! (D)



W

Already an inaccuracy, as White gains greater flexibility in his deployment in light of the fact that he has yet to commit his king. Further, with the centre closed, White's king may be able to stay in the centre in more or less perfect safety.

8 d5 ♘e7
 9 ♘d2 c5

Is this move a mistake? It's hard to say. In general, Black should avoid creating a 'Full Benoni' pawn structure (c4, d5, e4 vs c5, d6, e5) if the white king has not castled kingside, as White's king may then stay in the centre or castle queenside, followed by a pawn-storm on the kingside. However, in the given situation, White's king was already relatively safe in the closed centre, so he was preparing c4-c5, when his queenside attack is considerably faster than it is in the main line of the Classical King's Indian (7 0-0 ♘c6 8 d5, etc.).

10 g4

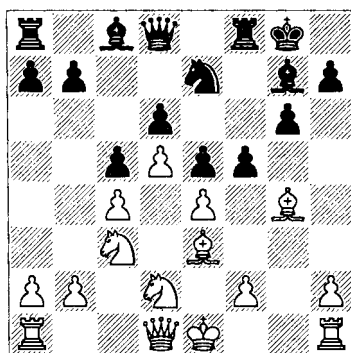
Polugaevsky plays to restrain Black's natural counterplay. In most King's Indians, the advance ...f5 will be played at some point or another, with the goal of gaining space on the kingside. By playing g2-g4, Polugaevsky makes it clear that he intends to swap twice on f5 in reply to that plan; this will offer White attacking chances based on the g-file, the b1-h7 diagonal and the use of the e4-square.

10 ... ♘xg4?!

Rodriguez plays what he hopes will prove to be a freeing combination. In *Grandmaster Performance*, Polugaevsky relates that he had never seen the move played in this position, so it came as quite a shock to him.

Here we see an instance of an imperfect freeing manoeuvre back-firing on the originator. There can be little doubt that Rodriguez is a stronger and better-informed player than von Gottschall, but the end result in this case is 'a little knowledge is a dangerous thing', since Black ends up saddled with an extremely bad king's bishop.

11 ♖xg4 f5 (D)



W

12 h3! fxg4

Black has a choice of continuations that give him an inferior game:

a) 12...f4 13 ♖xc5 dxc5 14 ♖xc8 ♜xc8 15 ♜g4 is clearly better for White thanks to Black's bad bishop – Polugaevsky.

b) 12...h5 13 ♖xh5 gxh5 14 ♖g5 wins the h-pawn – Polugaevsky.

c) 12...b6 13 f3 leads to essentially the same type of position as the game – Polugaevsky.

13 hxg4 a6

14 a4

Polugaevsky makes a very instructive comment:

"At first sight, this seems to be excessive prophylaxis, but ... What is of primary importance in positions of this type is the overall strategic plan, and not some move taken in isolation."

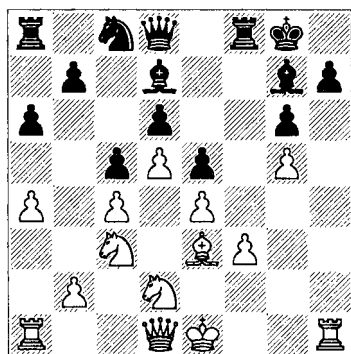
White's idea is to squeeze the opponent over the entire board, and then to exploit his spatial advantage and the bad bishop at g7.

14 ... ♖d7

15 f3 ♜c8?

Polugaevsky gives 15...♞a5, preventing the further advance of White's a-pawn, as the only move.

16 g5! (D)



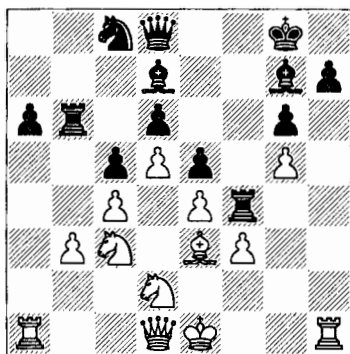
B

This space gain stops ...♖f6 and ...♖g5, aiming either to activate or to exchange off the bad bishop.

16 ... ♜b8

17 a5! b5

18 axb6 ♖xb6
19 b3 ♖f4! (D)



W

20 ♖g1! ♖f7

Both sides showed good judgement concerning the manoeuvre ...♖f4. Black, of course, hoped that White would win the exchange at the cost of activating the dark-square bishop, while White refused to be distracted from his positional build-up.

Polugaevsky notes that 20...♙f8 (intending 21...♙e7) allows White to play 21 ♖e2 ♙e7 22 ♙xf4 exf4 23 e5! and the square e4 is cleared for the knight. Instead, he recommends 20...♖h4 as the move that offers Black the most chance of counterplay.

21 ♖e2 ♙e8
22 ♖a3 ♖a7
23 ♖a1 ♖bb7
24 ♖a5

White loses his queen after 24 ♖xa6?? ♖xa6 25 ♖xa6 ♖a7.

24 ... ♖c7
25 ♘d1!

The knight heads for d3, where it will support the pawn advances b3-b4 and f3-f4.

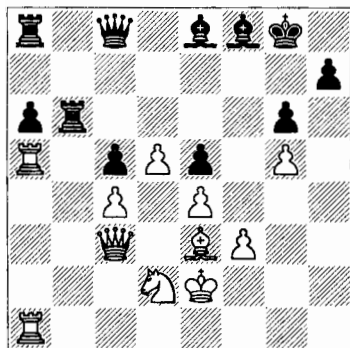
25 ... ♘b6
26 ♘f2 ♘d7
27 ♘d3 ♖a8
28 ♖c3 ♙f8
29 ♖ga1 ♖b6

White wins the a-pawn after 29...♘b8 30 b4 cxb4 31 ♘xb4 ♙b5 32 ♘d3! – Polugaevsky.

30 b4 ♖c8

Polugaevsky indicates that the only try was the exchange sacrifice 30...cxb4 31 ♙xb6 ♖xb6 32 ♘xb4, though he concludes that it would be inadequate after the further 32...♖d8 33 ♖e3 ♘c5 34 ♘d3 ♘xd3 35 ♘xd3 ♙e7 36 ♖xa6 ♖xa6 37 ♖xa6 ♙xg5 38 ♖b6 +.

31 bxc5 ♘xc5
32 ♘xc5 dxc5 (D)



W

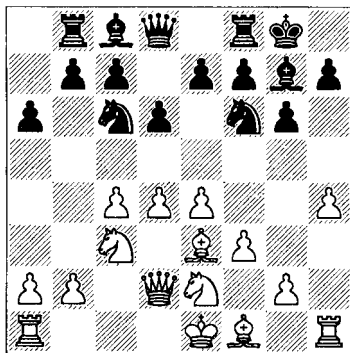
33 ♖b1! ♖xb1

34	♖xb1	♙d6
35	♖d2	♚a7
36	♗a3	♗h3
37	♞xa6	♗g2+
38	♜d3	1-0

So far, we have seen an example where the side with the bad bishop made no effort to rectify the problem and another example where his cleverness backfired on him. In the following example, he does nothing unusual, but makes sure to play actively. Yet in the end, his bishop stays locked up and White wins a very pretty game.

Petursson – W. Watson
Palma de Mallorca 1989

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♖c3 ♙g7 4 e4
 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♙e3 ♖c6 7 ♖ge2 a6
 8 ♗d2 ♞b8 9 h4! (D)

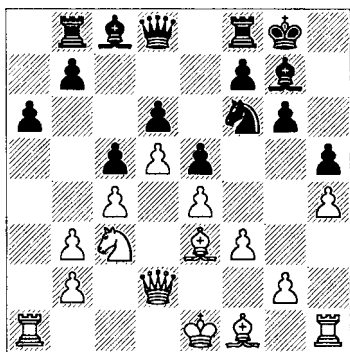


B

This finesse gives White a wide range of possibilities. The basic

idea is to attack on the kingside and this is what White will do if Black doesn't play ...h5. However, if Black does stop the further advance of the h-pawn, then White still retains attacking chances, but can also continue with strict positional methods, as having the pawn at h5 gives Black certain problems.

9	...	h5
10	♖c1	e5
11	d5	♖d4
12	♖b3	♖xb3
13	axb3	c5 (D)



W

Black couldn't maintain his knight at d4, so he had to swap it off. Yet even with a doubled b-pawn, White is still better on the queenside, so Watson plays to shut down the sector by playing ...c5. The downside is that his king's bishop is now bad.

It should be noted that the most important factor in judging whether a bishop is good or bad is to take a

look at which pawns *cannot* be shifted from the colour they stand on. For instance, here Black has three pawns fixed on dark squares, so despite the fact that he has fewer pawns on the dark squares than the light squares, his king's bishop is the bad bishop, as there is no good way to liberate it.

14 ♖e2 ♞e8
15 g4 f5
16 gxf5 gxf5
17 exf5 ♙xf5

The main feature of the position is now clear. White has opened the g-file, the b1-h7 diagonal and the e4-square. If Black is unable to advance his e-pawn, then his king's bishop will stay bad and he will also face problems on both sides of the board.

18 ♞e4 ♙xe4

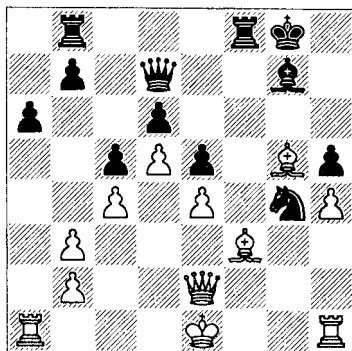
In *Informator 48*, Petursson gives 18...♞f6 19 ♖d3 ± as an alternative.

The problem with the text is that it leaves Black exposed on the light squares and practically ensures that his king's bishop will stay buried. Perhaps he will be able to counter-attack the e-pawn at some point, but White should be able to provide it with sufficient protection.

19 fxe4 ♞f6
20 ♖f3 ♞d7

Or 20...♞b6 21 ♞d3 ♞g4 22 ♖d2 ± – Petursson.

21 ♞e2 ♞g4
22 ♖g5! (D)
22 ... b5?!



B

Petursson examines several alternatives:

a) 22...♞f4 23 ♞g1! is clearly better for White.

b) 22...♖f6 23 0-0-0!, intending 24 ♞dg1, is also clearly better for White.

c) The best course is 22...♞f7! 23 0-0! (the issue is now over control of the f-file, so 23 0-0-0? is an inaccuracy) 23...♞bf8 24 ♖xg4 hxg4 25 ♞xf7 ♞xf7 26 ♞f1 ± is better for White, as he has the plan 27 ♞xf7, followed by ♖g1-g2-g3, when the pawn at g4 is weak – Petursson.

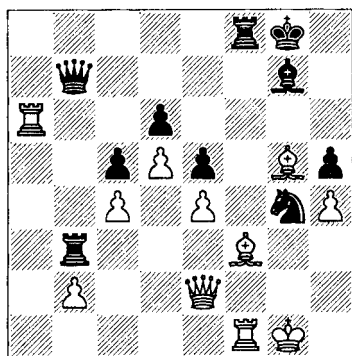
23 0-0!

Petursson might also be able to get away with 23 ♞xa6, but he prefers to castle and leave pawn-grabbing for later.

23 ... bxc4
24 bxc4 ♞b3
25 ♞xa6

The immediate 25 ♖xg4? is met by 25...♞g3+.

25 ... ♖b7 (D)



W

26 ♖a2

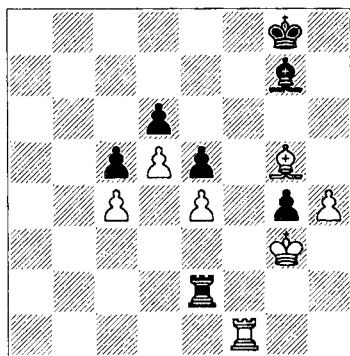
Solid and good enough to leave White clearly better. But he also had an interesting alternative available in 26 ♖xg4!?, with the point that 26... ♖xa6?? loses to the reply 27 ♖e6+. White also does well after 26... ♖g3+ 27 ♖h2, with an extra pawn and better bishop, so that leaves 26... hxc4 27 ♖xf8+! (27 ♖xd6? ♖g3+ 28 ♖h2 ♖ff3! gives Black a winning attack) 27... ♖xf8 28 ♖xg4, and White mates if 28... ♖xa6? by 29 ♖f6+ ♖f7 30 ♖e6+ ♖g6 31 h5+!, etc. – Mayer.

26 ... ♖b8
 27 ♖g2 ♖xb2
 28 ♖xb2 ♖xb2
 29 ♖xg4!

Petursson assesses this position as winning. Inferior was 29 ♖xb2? ♖xb2+ 30 ♖g3 ♖b3 – Petursson.

29 ... hxc4
 30 ♖xb2 ♖xb2+

31 ♖g3 ♖e2 (D)



W

32 ♖xg4 ♖xe4+

33 ♖f5

Petursson's king is able to stroll in on the weakened light squares, undetected by Black's dark-square bishop.

33 ... ♖xc4
 34 ♖g6 ♖b4
 35 h5 ♖b7
 36 h6 ♖f8
 37 ♖h1 ♖d7
 38 ♖b1 c4
 39 ♖b8 ♖c7
 40 ♖f6 c3
 41 ♖g7 1-0

A cute mating attack in a reduced ending. White's extremely active king deserves special recognition.

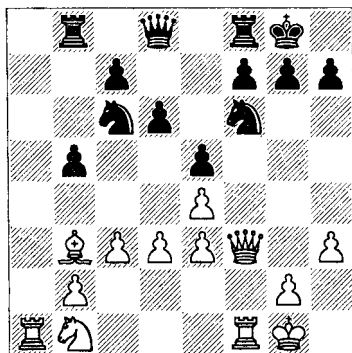
The moral of Petursson-Watson is that some bishops are bad and even the best efforts may not be enough to solve the problem they pose.

Sometimes a bishop that is well-placed and unobstructed by its own pawns 'goes bad'. In the following game, one of the world's youngest grandmasters has a bishop that looks particularly impressive end up as bad as any in this book.

Leko – Shirov
Tilburg 1996

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4
♙a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♙c5 6 c3 b5 7 ♙b3
d6 8 a4 ♙g4 9 d3 ♚b8 10 axb5
axb5 11 h3 ♙h5 12 ♙e3 ♙xe3 13
fxe3 ♙xf3 14 ♚xf3 0-0 (D)

Leko has emerged from the opening with an acceptable position; indeed, the open f-file and his well-placed bishop would seem to give him the tools for forging a real advantage.

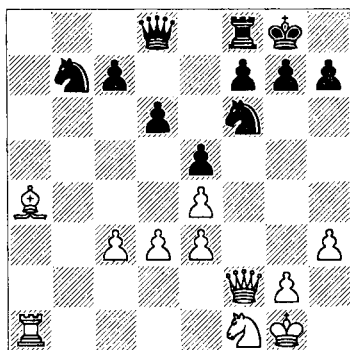


15 ♘d2 b4
16 ♚f2 ♚a8
17 ♚b1 ♘a5

Shirov's queenside activity is sufficient to distract White from any kingside build-up he might have intended. Furthermore, it turns out that the bishop doesn't have a stable square on the a2-g8 diagonal. Perhaps White's apparent opening advantage was just that: apparent.

18 ♙a4 ♚b8
19 ♚a1 bxc3
20 bxc3 ♚b2
21 ♘f1 ♚xf2
22 ♚xf2 ♘b7! (D)

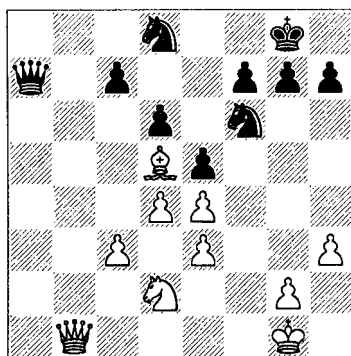
Continuing to harass the white bishop.



W

23 ♙c6 ♘c5
24 ♚c2 ♚b8
25 ♚b1 ♚a7
26 d4 ♘e6
27 ♘d2 ♚b8
28 ♙d5 ♚xb1+
29 ♚xb1 ♘d8 (D)

An interesting ending has arisen. Queen and bishop vs queen



W

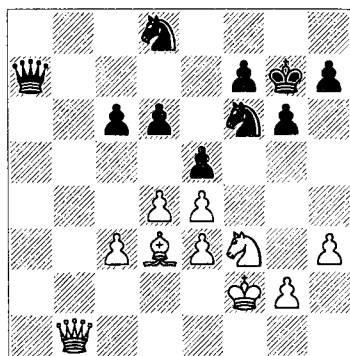
and knight is generally considered favourable for the side with the knight (see Chapter 17). It's unclear whether the addition of a pair of knights should be enough to change this assessment in the general case; it certainly doesn't prove enough in this particular game.

- 30 ♖f2 g6
 31 ♜f3 c6
 32 ♙c4 ♖g7
 33 ♙d3 (D)

The bishop retreats to a defensive role, which it will play for the rest of the game. White's centre is fragile and Leko is trying not to be forced into any further weakening advances.

- 33 ... ♜e6
 34 ♜b2 ♜c7
 35 ♙c2 h6
 36 ♖e2 ♜g5!
 37 ♜xg5 hxg5

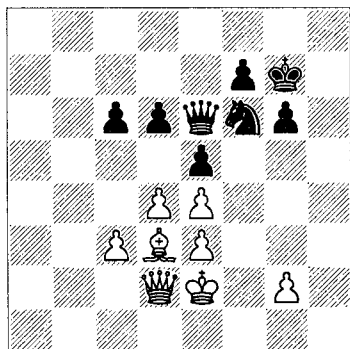
Black's doubled g-pawn is an asset, as it can be used to open up territory on the kingside.



B

- 38 ♙d3 g4
 39 hxg4 ♜d7
 40 ♖f1 ♜xg4
 41 ♜e2 ♜h4
 42 ♜f2 ♜h1+
 43 ♖e2 ♜a1
 44 ♜e1 ♜a2+
 45 ♜d2 ♜e6 (D)

Leko survived the first charge of the black queen, but he is far from solving his problems, as the queen can try to penetrate on both the kingside and the queenside.



W

46 ♖c2 c5
47 dxc5

Now any pretence of White's pawns being mobile is gone. Leko was presumably afraid of the tactic 47...cxd4 48 exd4 exd4 49 cxd4 ♘xe4!.

47 ... dxc5
48 ♔e1 ♖c6
49 c4 ♖b6
50 ♖c3 ♘d7

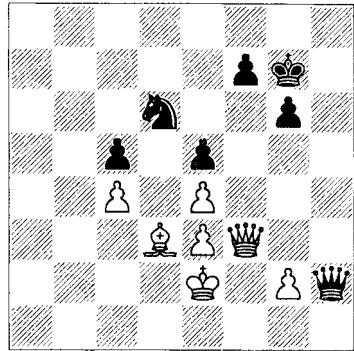
The knight will eventually reach d6, where it will press on the weak pawns at e4 and c4. It might have been nice if the knight didn't have to delay its trip to d6, but Black's structural and positional advantages are so huge that he doesn't have to rush.

51 ♔e2 ♖e6
52 ♙c2 ♖g4+
53 ♙f1 ♖g3
54 ♖e1 ♖h2
55 ♖f2 ♘f6
56 ♔e2 ♖h1
57 ♖f1 ♖h4
58 ♖f2 ♖h2
59 ♖f3 ♘e8
60 ♙d3 ♘d6 (D)

The knight has arrived and will add greater meaning to the tacking of the black queen.

61 ♖f1 ♖h4
62 ♖f2 ♖e7
63 ♖f1 ♖b7
64 ♖a1

Leko elects to take play into a pure queen and pawn ending, possibly because he thought that his c-



W

pawn would provide him with adequate counterplay. The rest of the game is instructive, but doesn't require comment: 64...♙f6 65 ♖a5 ♘xe4 66 ♙xe4 ♖xe4 67 ♖xc5 ♖xg2+ 68 ♔d3 ♖f1+ 69 ♔d2 ♖f2+ 70 ♔d3 ♖f5+ 71 ♔c3 g5 72 ♖b6+ ♙g7 73 c5 g4 74 c6 g3 75 c7 g2 76 e4 ♖f1 77 ♔d2 g1 ♖ 78 ♖xg1+ ♖xg1 79 c8 ♖ ♖d4+ 80 ♔e2 ♖xe4+ 81 ♙f2 ♖f4+ 82 ♔e2 e4 83 ♖c3+ ♙g6 84 ♖c6+ ♙g5 85 ♖c5+ ♙g4 86 ♖c8+ ♙g3 87 ♖c5 ♙g2 88 ♖d5 ♖f3+ 89 ♔e1 ♖e3+ 0-1

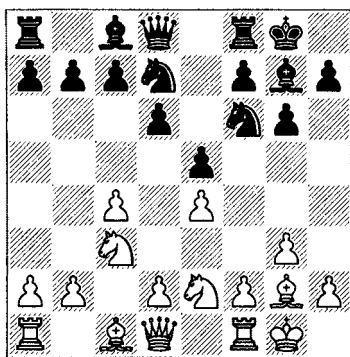
There are several cases in opening theory where the player with a particularly bad bishop plays for its exchange. The most typical case is seen in French Defences, e.g., 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e5 b6, intending 5...♙a6. One might also see this in a Modern/King's Indian type of position, for example, 1 d4 g6 2 c4 d6 3 e4 e5 4 d5 ♙h6!?,

when Black hopes that the holes on the kingside won't miss the dark-squared bishop.

However, it can also be wrong to swap a bad bishop, as sometimes it is performing other valuable defensive duties. The following game is a good illustration of this.

Botvinnik – V. Scherbakov
USSR Ch (Moscow) 1955

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 g6 3 g3 ♙g7 4
 ♙g2 0-0 5 e4 d6 6 ♘ge2 e5 7 0-0
 ♘bd7 (D)



W

There is nothing wrong with this move, but given that Scherbakov uses a time-consuming method of playing it to d4, he would have done better to play 7...♘c6.

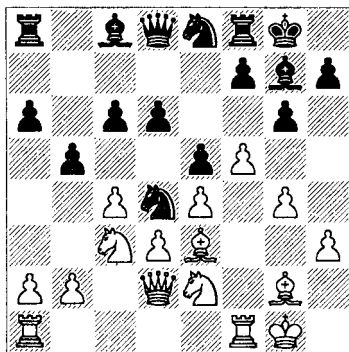
8 d3 ♘c5

Heading for e6. A superior approach is the immediate 8...c6, intending to initiate queenside play with 9...a6 and 10...b5.

9 f4 c6
 10 h3 ♘e6
 11 f5 ♘d4

Now we can see the result of Scherbakov's loss of time. Instead of playing ...♘c6 and ...♘d4, he has tossed away two entire tempi, which can be seen as White's kingside space advantage (f2-f4-f5).

12 g4 ♘e8
 13 ♙e3 a6
 14 ♖d2 b5 (D)



W

15 ♙g5!

Botvinnik teases Black. The immediate 15 ♙h6 was also possible, but then White wouldn't have any immediate way to penetrate on the kingside, as the black king would reach g7. With the text, Botvinnik offers an attractive-looking trap.

15 ... ♙f6?

Into which Black falls! It seems natural to exchange off the king's bishop, but now his king position is impossible to hold together. It's

understandable that he didn't want to play the superior 15...f6, when his king's bishop is buried, random queen moves allow 16 f6, and 15...♘f6 walks into a pin, but the text allows White a decisive attack. Further, 15...♚b6 would threaten a discovery and Black could then follow up with 16...♘f6, when the knight isn't pinned.

16 ♙xf6 ♘xf6

17 ♘xd4

Ensuring that the centre will be closed before attacking on the flank.

17 ... exd4

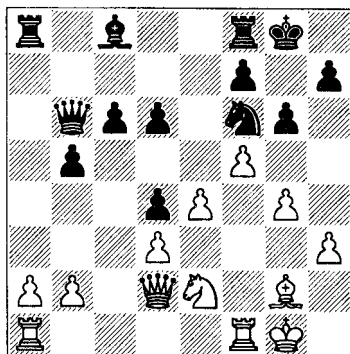
18 ♘e2 ♚b6

19 cxb5

This also is intended to keep the centre closed before White decentralizes his queen.

19 ... axb5 (D)

20 ♚h6! ♙d7



W

21 g5 ♘h5

22 ♘f4 ♘g7

23 f6 1-0

Verdict: Bad bishops are frequent occurrences. Their importance varies from position to position, but a bad bishop inside its own pawn chain is always a matter for concern.

12 The Sacrifice for Active Bishops

Few attacking forces are as powerful as a pair of active bishops. Two bishops placed optimally on an open board will attack 26 squares, which is nearly as many as the queen's 27 squares on an open board. Of course, a pair of bishops is usually considered to be worth six 'points', but common sense suggests that a pair of active bishops must be accorded a value of almost nine under some circumstances. It should come as no surprise that it often proves fruitful to sacrifice a pawn – or even an exchange – to activate a bishop pair.

It is difficult to draw up any 'general rules' for when one should sacrifice a pawn to activate a bishop pair. In many situations, a pair of bishops will be active 'in their own right', but a pawn disadvantage can still prove to be a pawn disadvantage. These decisions are cases that must be considered on an individual basis. The player with the bishop pair should probably consider three factors before deciding to sacrifice material.

First, is it possible for the opponent to neutralize one of the

bishops with his remaining bishop (assuming he has one)? Secondly, can the opponent's knight reach a stable post that will serve to blunt the bishop pair? Finally, does a concrete analysis of the position arising after the pawn sacrifice seem to justify such a measure?

If the answer to the last question is 'yes', then by all means sacrifice the pawn. However, if the answer to the third question is 'maybe', then the pawn sacrifice should probably be rejected if either of the first two questions can be answered in the affirmative.

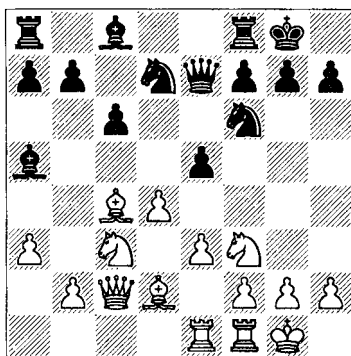
The difficulties posed to the defender by such a sacrifice are demonstrated by the following game, in which a former world champion missed several superior defensive continuations.

Botvinnik – Euwe

Moscow World Ch

(Match Tournament) 1948

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3
c6 5 e3 ♘bd7 6 ♙d3 ♙b4 7 a3
♙a5 8 ♖c2 ♖e7 9 ♙d2 dxc4 10
♙xc4 e5 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♚ae1! (D)



B

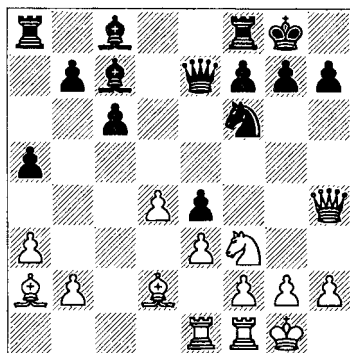
Botvinnik's decision on how to place his rooks shows a penetrating insight into the position. The tension of the centre pawns will soon resolve itself in one of three ways. It could be that Black will capture at d4, in which case Botvinnik intends to recapture with his pawn, gaining a tempo on the queen. Another approach is for White to exchange at e5, in which case he will have a kingside pawn majority that is ably supported by the rooks at e1 and f1. Finally, Euwe may choose to advance ...e4, in which case White can play f2-f3 to undermine Black's strong centre point. Of course, this will leave the white e-pawn backward on an open file, so the e1-rook will guard it and can also help enforce the push e3-e4.

- 12 ... ♖c7
13 ♗e4! ♗xe4
14 ♕xe4 a5?!

Subsequent events show this to be a pointless move. Botvinnik

gives 14...♖d6 as superior in *Botvinnik's Best Games 1947-1970*.

- 15 ♖a2! ♗f6
16 ♕h4 e4 (D)



W

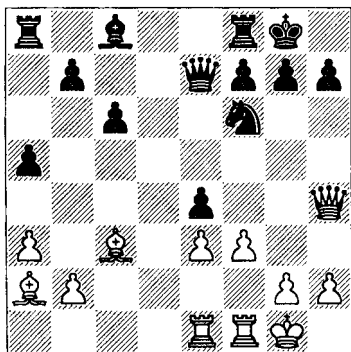
- 17 ♗e5!

Botvinnik sacrifices a pawn so as to activate his otherwise bad bishop. White now has the opportunity to whip up a strong kingside attack if the pawn is accepted, as his bishops and queen are well-placed and his king's rook will soon enter the attack with f2-f3.

- 17 ... ♖xe5

Botvinnik writes that "Black certainly should not have accepted" the pawn sacrifice. He recommends 17...♖e6 18 ♖b1 ♖d5, when 19 f3 ♗fe8 allows Black to defend his centre and keep the white bishops contained.

- 18 dxe5 ♕xe5
19 ♖c3 ♕e7
20 f3 (D)
20 ... ♗d5?!

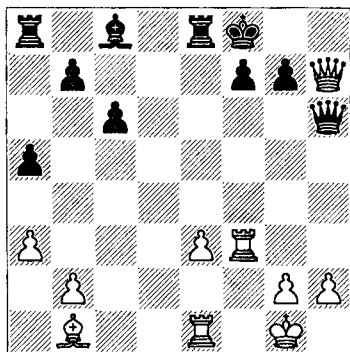


B

Botvinnik considered this the decisive mistake. It's true that Black must return his pawn one way or another, but now White's bishops and better development give him an undisputed advantage. Black has two superior continuations:

a) 20...exf3!? 21 ♖b1 ♜e8! (Botvinnik only considered the losing 21...h6? 22 ♜xf3 ♘d5 23 ♜g3! +-) 22 ♖xf6 (22 ♜xf3 ♘e4! is fine for Black) 22...♜xf6 23 ♜xh7+ ♔f8 24 ♜xf3 ♜h6! (not 24...♜xb2? 25 ♖g6 ♖e6 26 ♖b1! and 27 ♜xb7 is winning) with the following position (D):

25 ♜xh6 (25 ♜c2 ♖e6 holds together) 25...gxh6 and the ending should be tenable, particularly in view of Black's queenside majority and more active king – Mayer. In fact, this ending should be better for Black than the one that arises in the next note, as he has managed to eliminate White's bishop pair.



W

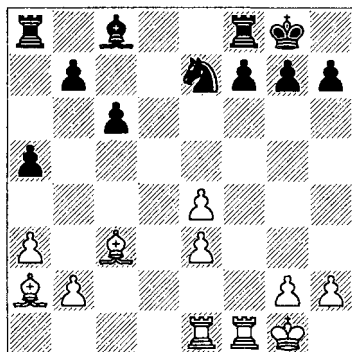
b) 20...♖e6 21 ♖b1 ♘d5 22 ♜xe4 f5 and 23...♘xc3 – Botvinnik. However, 22 ♜xe7! ♘xe7 23 ♖xe4 looks better, since it retains the bishop pair and gives White a nice ending – Mayer. However, an analyst who is not specifically credited (possibly Botvinnik in another set of notes, but I am unaware of a corroborating source) on the ChessBase 'Mainbase' now gives 23...♖b3 as equal. It's true that White then can't use the d-file very easily, but Black will have to prove that he can neutralize the bishops and this line strikes me as superior to Botvinnik's (original?) variation.

21 ♜xe7 ♘xe7

22 fxe4 (D)

22 ... b6

Black's problem in this queenless middlegame is that the white pieces are so much more active than the black pieces. Botvinnik considers two alternatives but finds both wanting:



B

a) 22... Qe6 23 Qxe6 fxe6 24 Qxf8+ Qxf8 25 Qf1+ Qg8 26 Qd1 +- – Botvinnik. The rook's penetration on the d-file is decisive.

b) 22... Qg4 23 Qf4 Qh5 24 g4 Qg6, with the division:

b1) 25 h4 h5 26 Qh2 Qh7 27 Qg1 f6 28 gxh5 Qxh5 29 e5! 'with a strong attack' – Botvinnik.

b2) 25 Qd1 Qad8 26 Qxd8 Qxd8 27 Qxa5, when Keres believes that Black has some counterplay after 27... Qd1+ 28 Qf2 Qc1 (cited in Botvinnik but apparently from the tournament book). Botvinnik dismisses this on the grounds that White has an extra pawn and the two bishops.

23 Qd1

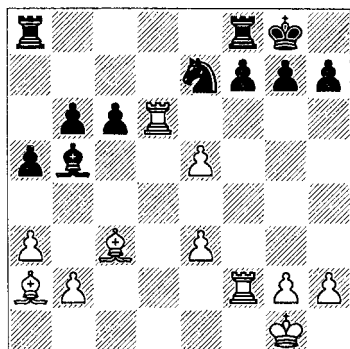
Note, however, that 23 Qxf7? Qxf7 24 Qf1 Qd5! favours Black.

23 ... Qg6

24 Qd6!

The passive placing of Black's pieces makes it very difficult to put up a sustained defence.

24 ... Qa6
25 Qf2 Qb5
26 e5 Qe7 (D)



W

27 e4

Botvinnik prefers to pile up the pressure and limit the knight's access to the centre.

27 Qd7 should also be favourable for White, when 27... Qd5 allows 28 e6. Note that this is better than 28 Qxd5 cxd5 26 Qxd5, when the opposite-coloured bishops may save Black, or 28 e4 Qxc3 29 bxc3, when the f7-pawn will fall, but White's own pawns have become weak.

27 ... c5
28 e6! f6
29 Qxb6 Qc6
30 Qxc6! Qxc6
31 e7+ Qf7
32 Qd5 1-0

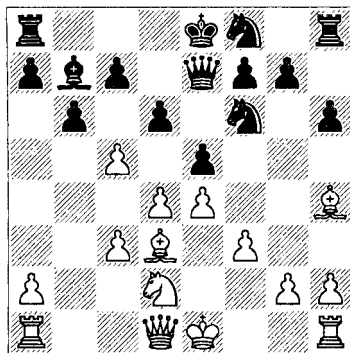
Understandable, as 32... Qc8 33 e8 Q+! Qxe8 34 Qxc6 and 35 Qd5 nets a piece.

The following game impressed me tremendously as a youngster; indeed, it still does. Tal's imagination seems leagues beyond that of practically any other chess player, but Black was not without his resources.

Tal – Hecht

Varna Olympiad 1962

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 ♘c3
 ♙b4 5 ♙g5 ♙b7 6 e3 h6 7 ♙h4
 ♙xc3+ 8 bxc3 d6 9 ♘d2 ♘bd7 10
 f3 ♚e7 11 e4 e5 12 ♙d3 ♘f8 13
 c5!? (D)



B

Having the bishops and having active bishops aren't the same thing. With this pawn sacrifice – which is typical in this type of position – Tal aims to open the a2-f7 diagonal and clears the c4-square. White certainly has practical compensation for his material deficit. It should be stressed here that this

sacrifice, like so many made for the sake of active bishops, should be classified as 'speculative'.

13 ... dxc5

Hecht really is constrained in his response. He should take the pawn, because otherwise 14 cxd6 will undouble the pawn free of charge, but 13...bxc5 14 d5 would leave his queenside light squares weak and the bishop at b7 would be quite out of play.

14 dxe5 ♙xe5

15 ♙a4+ c6?!

This move must be considered questionable, since it weakens the d6-square. In *Mikhail Tal Games 1949-1962*, the Bulgarian series of Tal's complete games, the response 15...♘d6d7 is examined, when White has the choice of 16 ♚c1 ♙e6 17 0-0 ♙c6, which is assessed as unclear, and 16 ♙c2, when the indication is that White has 'attack', presumably in view of his bishop pair and kingside majority.

Another idea, apparently more logical, is 15...♘d8d7, preparing castling and intending to meet 16 ♙c2 with 16...♘d5! – Mayer. In *Study Chess with Mikhail Tal*, Tal & Koblenc suggest that 16 ♙xf6 is best, when "Black would then have to lose a few tempi before castling." The downside of this approach, however, is that White cedes the bishop pair and may still have to be concerned about double attacks based on a later ...♙xc3.

The four-volume Bulgarian series of Tal's complete games features annotations to all of Tal's games. It's an impressive work (volume three has just been released as I write this), but for unknown reasons, none of the masters or grandmasters who worked on the games are credited as annotators for particular games. This inexplicable approach makes it impossible to attach a name to any original analytical work included in the series, so I have chosen to designate any unattributed analysis from it as 'Bulgarian Series'.

16 0-0 ♘g6

Black lands in major trouble after 16...♙xc3? 17 ♘c4!, with the options:

a) 17...b5 18 ♘d6+ ♔d7 19 ♘xb5! cxb5 20 ♙xb5+, is assessed as winning by the Bulgarian Series, e.g., 20...♙e7 21 e5, with a powerful initiative.

b) 17...♙xd3 18 ♚fd1 b5 19 ♚xd3 bxa4 20 ♘d6+ ♙e7 21 ♘f5+ (Tal & Koblenc), is crushing, as g7 hangs.

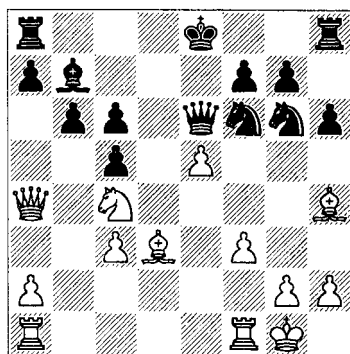
17 ♘c4 ♙e6

Black loses after 17...b5 18 ♘xe5 bxa4 19 ♘xg6 fxe6 20 e5 – Tal (cited in the Bulgarian Series).

18 e5! (D)

18 ... b5

Black raises the ante. The Bulgarian Series offers some interesting alternatives after 18...♘h4!? 19 ♘d6+ ♙f8:



B

a) 20 ♙xh4 ♙xe5 – Bulgarian Series. This is good for Black, because 21 ♘xb7 ♙e3+ snares the bishop.

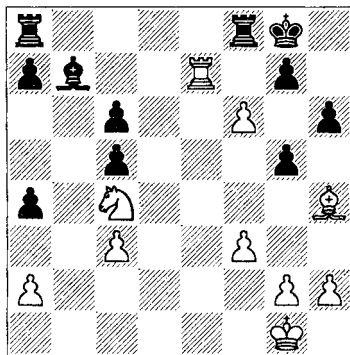
b) 20 ♚ae1 (!?) – Bulgarian Series) 20...♙d5 21 ♘xb7 ♙xd3 22 exf6, when White has compensation for his material but Black may be able to defend – Mayer. However, in a practical game against Tal, it would be hard to like Black's chances at all.

19 exf6! bxa4?

Hecht makes a serious mistake in accepting the queen sacrifice. An attitude of 'show me' is often useful for the defender, but 19...0-0! 20 ♚ae1! ♙xe1! offered the best chance at refutation, e.g., 21 ♚xe1 bxa4 22 ♙xg6 fxe6 23 ♚e7 was given by Tal as winning, as he apparently only considered 23...♚f7? 24 ♘d6! (cited in the Bulgarian Series).

In fact, Lilienthal (also cited in the Bulgarian Series) shows that

23...g5! (D) results in extraordinary complications:



W

a) 24 ♖xb7 gxh4 25 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 26 ♕g6 ♖f7 blockades the dangerous f-pawn.

b) 24 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 25 ♕g3 (White plays to maintain his passed pawn, which is eliminated after both 25 ♔e5 ♖xf6 and 25 ♕xg5 hxg5 26 ♖xb7 ♖xf6) 25...♕a6 leaves White at an important junction:

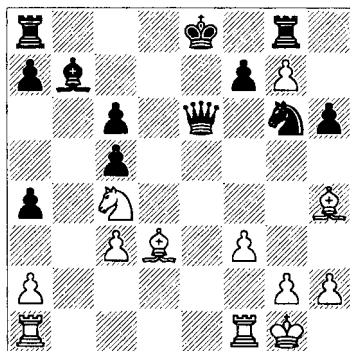
b1) 26 ♔d2 ♖xf6 and the white initiative is finally grinding down, e.g., 27 ♖c7 ♖e6 28 ♔e4 ♖b8! or 27 ♖d7 ♖f5 28 ♔e4 ♕c4 – Lilienthal.

b2) 26 ♕e5! appears strong after 26...♕xc4 27 f7 (as given by Lilienthal). My first thought was that 27...h5!? is good, as it clears the h6-square for the black king. However, Graham Burgess points out that 28 g4! continues the complications by fixing the g5-pawn as a target, e.g., 28...hxg4 (or 28...h4

29 f4!) 29 fxg4 ♖ad8 30 h4 gxh4 31 g5 when the addition of the g-pawn to the attack leaves Black scrambling to find a defence. The bind that White achieves in this line is based in part on the presence of opposite-coloured bishops, for while he is down an entire rook, he has a substantial advantage on the dark squares.

20 fxg7

♖g8 (D)



W

21 ♕f5!!

An extraordinary move that restricts the movements of the black king, which is already in a box because of the pawn at g7. The coordination between the various white minor pieces is really impressive.

21 ... ♔xh4

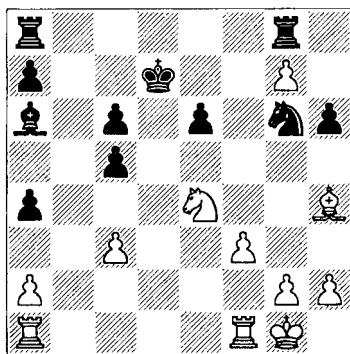
Black has a number of options, but White is doing well by this time:

a) 21...♖xc4 22 ♖ae1+ ♖e6 23 ♖xe6+! fxg6 24 ♕xg6+ ♔d7 25 ♖d1+ “followed by ♕f6 and the

white pawn on g7 cripples Black” – Tal & Koblenc.

b) 21...♖xf5 22 ♜d6+ ♜d7 23 ♜xf5 (the knight guards the h4-bishop) 23...♜xh4 24 ♜ad1+ ♜c7 25 ♜xh4 ♜xg7 26 ♜fe1 was given as a winning ending by Tal, but the Bulgarian Series points out that 25...♜c8! is an improvement, because the knight can't return to play through f5. However, they suggest 24 ♜xh4!, when White will either transpose to Tal's analysis, for example, 24...♜xg7 25 ♜ad1+, or bring his knight into play via f5.

c) 21...♜a6 22 ♜xe6 fxe6 23 ♜d6+ ♜d7 24 ♜e4! (D), with the division:



B

c1) 24...♜xf1 25 ♜f6+ ♜c7 26 ♜g3+ e5 27 ♜xg8 ♜xg8 28 ♜xf1 ♜xg7 29 ♜e1 is assessed as winning for White by the Bulgarian Series; I suspect that this analysis stems from Tal.

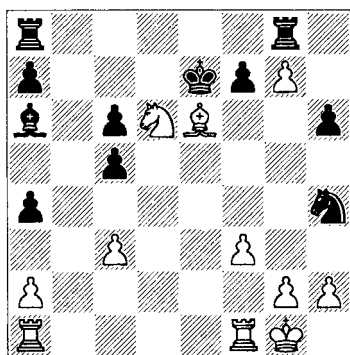
c2) 24...♜xh4 25 ♜xc5+ ♜c7 26 ♜xa6+ ♜b6 27 ♜b4 ♜xg7 28 g3 is clearly better for White – Lillienthal.

Perhaps the nicest part of Tal's play in this game is the manner in which so many of the variations result simply in a superior ending which must still be won.

22 ♜xe6 ♜a6

White is also doing well after 22...fxe6 23 ♜d6+.

23 ♜d6+ ♜e7 (D)



W

24 ♜c4!

This move, by which the hanging knight at d6 guards the bishop at c4, is an amusing echo of the knight's guarding of the bishop at h4 in variation 'b' in the note to Black's 21st move.

24 ... ♜xg7
25 g3 ♜xd6?

Now Black's problems increase, as he finds himself with an inferior knight against a strong bishop. Tal

suggests 25...♙xc4 26 ♘xc4 ♖d8, which he assesses as clearly better for White.

26 ♙xa6 ♘f5?

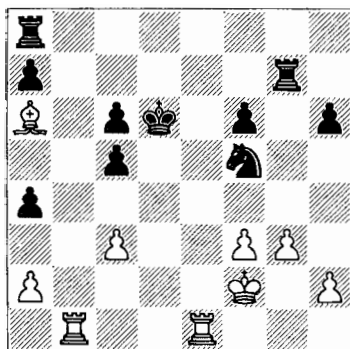
This makes life easier for White, as he now gains control of the b-file. 26...♖b8 was superior.

27 ♖ab1 f6

28 ♖fd1+ ♖e7

29 ♖e1+ ♘d6

30 ♘f2 (D)



B

30 ... c4?!

Losing ground. It was better to shore up the knight with 30...h5.

31 g4 ♘e7

32 ♖b7 ♖ag8

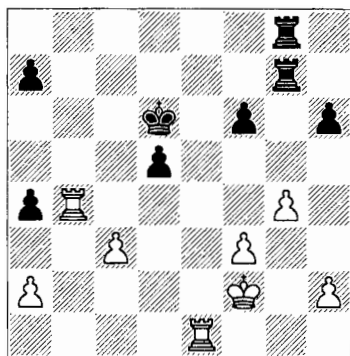
33 ♙xc4 ♘d5

34 ♙xd5

Tal takes play into a double rook ending. The black knight has finally reached a good square, so the decision to surrender the bishop isn't controversial.

34 ... cxd5

35 ♖b4 (D)



B

35 ... ♖c8?!

Tal indicates that Black should have played to get as many pawns off the board as possible with 35...h5 36 h3 hxg4 37 hxg4 f5.

36 ♖xa4 ♖xc3

37 ♖a6+ ♘c5

38 ♖xf6 h5

39 h3 hxg4

40 hxg4 ♖h7

41 g5 ♖h5

42 ♖f5 ♖c2+

43 ♘g3 ♘c4

44 ♖ee5 d4

45 g6 ♖h1

46 ♖c5+ ♘d3

47 ♖xc2 ♘xc2

48 ♘f4 ♖g1

49 ♖g5 1-0

White wins the king and pawn ending that arises after 49...♖xg5.

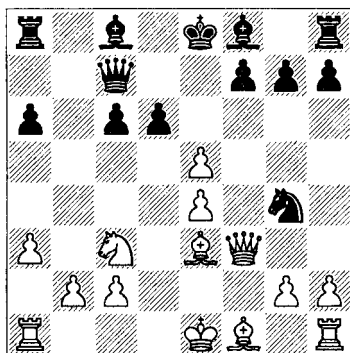
The bishop pair can be particularly effective in situations with opposite-wing castling. The following gem is one of a thousand

similar games that Black has won in the Sicilian.

Shiyanovsky – Taimanov

USSR Ch (Erevan) 1962

1 e4 c5 2 f3 c6 3 d4 cxd4 4
xd4 e6 5 c3 a6 6 e3 f6 7 a3
c7 8 f4 d6 9 f3 e5 10 xc6
bxc6 11 fxex5 g4! (D)



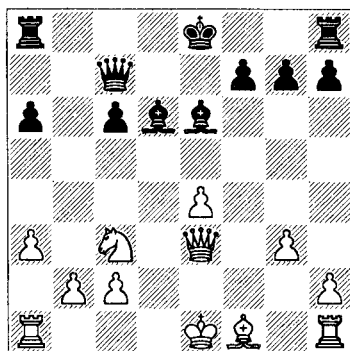
W

As Taimanov comments on a similar situation in *Taimanov's Selected Games*, "No Sicilian player would begrudge giving up a pawn for White's dark-square bishop."

12 exd6

Taimanov points out that preserving the bishop by 12 e3 f4 gives Black a very nice game after 12...dxe5 13 e3 g3 e5, so White might as well grab material and try to weather the storm.

12 ... e3xd6
13 g3 e3xd6
14 xex3 e6! (D)



W

Taimanov prevents the white bishop from coming to c4, where it would pressure f7 and could also serve to defend the queenside.

15 e3g2 b8

16 0-0-0

"White no longer has time for any other defences of the b2-pawn."
– Taimanov.

16 ... 0-0

17 he1 e5

18 xc5

Shiyanovsky prevents 18...a5, which would step up the pressure on the white king position. White's problem is that his king is menaced, but he has no attack of his own, despite the opposite-wing castling. Further, White's remaining bishop is quite bad and his knight must stay put if he values his king.

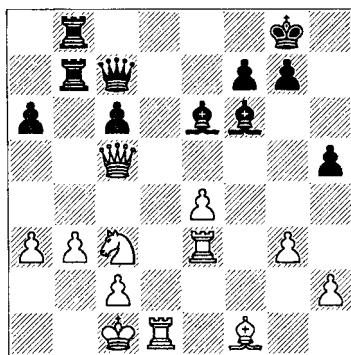
The present position is a good example of looking at the specifics of a position and not at the generalities. For instance, in the Dragon Variation, White is usually careful

not to exchange his dark-squared bishop for a knight, as then he has no good way to oppose Black's fianchettoed dark-squared bishop. Of course, the present game isn't a Dragon, but the bishop at e5 is on the long diagonal and so might as well be a Dragon bishop.

18 ... ♖b7
19 ♖e3 ♖fb8
20 b3 h5

A clever move that simultaneously creates 'luft' and introduces the positional threat ...h4.

21 ♖f1 ♖f6! (D)



W

22 a4

Taimanov indicates that 22 ♖xh5 ♖e7 doesn't help White, but that 22 ♖b1 might have increased his defensive chances.

22 ... ♖e7

23 ♖xh5 g6

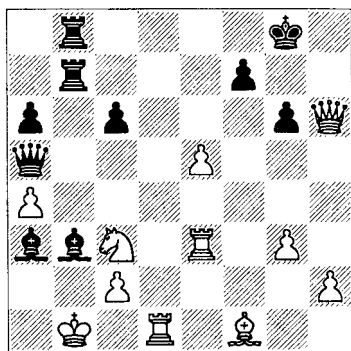
24 ♖h6

"Or 24 ♖f3 ♖g5 with a mounting attack." – Taimanov.

24 ... ♖a5
25 e5 ♖a3+
26 ♖b1

On 26 ♖d2, Black can win by either 26...♖b4 or 26...♖d7+ – Taimanov.

26 ... ♖xb3! (D)



W

27 cxb3

Or 27 ♖b5 ♖f8 28 ♖h4 ♖xa4 – Taimanov.

27 ... ♖xb3+

28 ♖c2

Black also wins after 28 ♖a2 ♖f8 – Taimanov.

28 ... ♖xc3+!

29 ♖xc3 ♖b2+

30 ♖d3 ♖d5+

31 ♖e3 ♖xd1

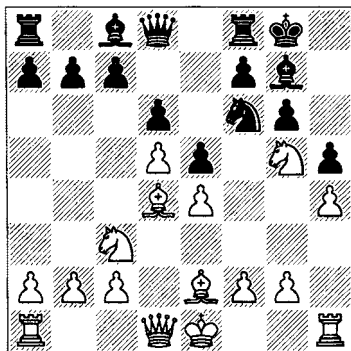
0-1

The sacrifice for the active bishops frequently unleashes both bishops, as we saw in the last three games. However, it is also a motif to free up one bishop in particular.

In the following game, Black's king's bishop becomes a powerhouse and the fact that White has no good means of opposing it is the secret to Black's pawn sacrifice. By comparison, Black's queen's bishop doesn't stir until move 19 and then only to give itself up as part of a queen trap.

Wade – Smyslov
Havana 1965

1 e4 d6 2 c3 d5 3 d4 g6 4 e2
g7 5 h4 h5 6 h3 c6 7 g5 0-0
8 e3 e5 9 d5 d4! 10 exd4 (D)



B

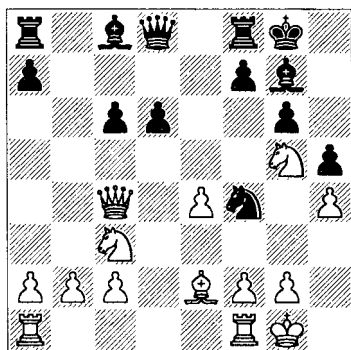
Wade accepts the pawn sacrifice, as otherwise the d4-knight is well-placed. This type of sacrifice to gain the bishop pair is typical of a variety of fianchetto defences, since it is now next to impossible for White to pierce the black king position, because he has no way to eliminate Black's dark-square

bishop. Moreover, the long dark diagonal is opened up.

10 ... exd4
11 ♖xd4 c6!

Naturally Smyslov wishes to open the position; not only does he have the bishops, but the white king is still in the centre.

12 dxc6 bxc6
13 0-0 d5
14 ♖c4 d4! (D)



W

Black's knight takes up an active post and creates possibilities of forking on e2. Smyslov now gives 15 f3 b8 16 ab1 (16 b3 a5) 16... b6 17 fd1 a6 18 a4 e5 19 g3 f6! as giving Black a 'strong initiative'. Wade plays an even worse approach.

15 ♖xc6? e3
16 f3 xb2
17 ♖xa8 xa1
18 xa1 b6!

Everything becomes clear: the white queen is in a trap.

19 e5 d5

20 g3

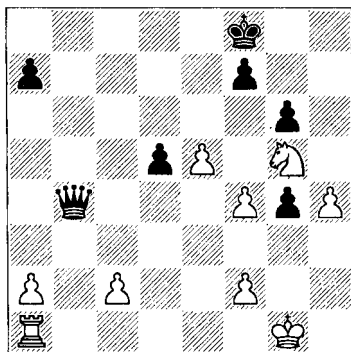
Smyslov notes that 20 ♖xd5
 ♗e6 wins a piece.

20 ... ♗g4

21 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8

22 ♗xg4 hxg4

23 gxf4 ♖b4! (D)



W

Smyslov goes after the weakened white pawns in such a manner that the rook can't get into the black position.

24 ♗g2 ♖xf4

25 ♖e1 ♗e8!

Black minimizes the impact of any e5-e6 attacks.

26 ♖e3 g3

27 ♖xg3 ♖xh4

28 c3 ♗e7

29 ♗g1 ♖f4

30 ♗h7 a5

31 ♗f6 ♖xe5

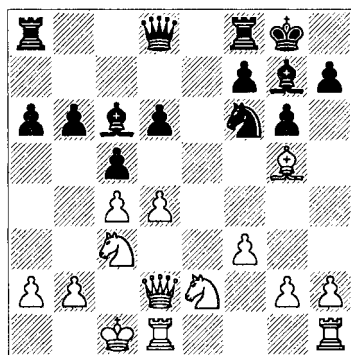
0-1

The king and pawn ending is a win after 32 ♖e3 ♗xf6, etc.

The motif of sacrificing material to obtain a pair of active bishops does not always have to be an attacking one. In the following game, Gligorić uses an exchange sacrifice to create complications that are not necessarily in his favour, but that offer practical defensive chances in an otherwise difficult position.

Hort – Gligorić*Amsterdam 1970*

1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♗c3 ♗g7 4 e4
 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♗e3 b6?! 7 ♗d3 a6
 8 ♗ge2 c5 9 e5! ♗fd7 10 exd6
 exd6 11 ♖d2 ♗c6 12 ♗e4! ♗b7
 13 0-0-0! ♗f6 14 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 15
 ♗g5 (D)



B

Hort has played the opening in a very aggressive manner, with no concern about his king possibly falling under an attack. As his reward, he gets to set up a nasty pin on the black knight and has the

threat 16 dxc5 dxc5 17 ♖f4 ♗e7
18 ♜d6, as given by Levy in *Gligorić's Best Games 1945-1970*.

15 ... ♜c8

16 d5 ♙d7

17 ♙g3 ♜e8!

Black must take action against the looming 18 ♖f4 and 19 ♙ce4, which will step up the pressure on the pinned knight. The text-move envisions an exchange sacrifice against the powerful g5-bishop, after which Black will have two bishops and practical chances. This type of exchange sacrifice was later to become common in the Soltis Variation of the Yugoslav Attack Sicilian Dragon, but this example predates the numerous Dragons that followed in its wake.

Hort has the advantage, but it should be stressed that Black also has his trumps: the two bishops; a powerful king's bishop; and he can open files for his attack on the king more quickly than White can.

18 ♖f4 ♜e5

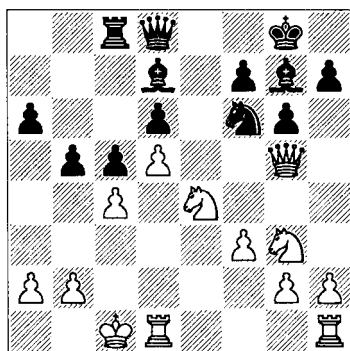
19 ♙ce4

Gligorić suggested after the game that 19 h4! is stronger, when he intended to play 19...h5 20 ♙ce4 ♜xg5 21 ♖xg5 ♙e8, offering to play an exchange-down ending where his bishop pair give him some practical drawing chances. It should be noted that in *ECO E* (First Edition), Razuvaev assesses the position after 19 h4! as clearly better for White.

Many of the Classicists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century claimed that two bishops versus rook and knight were equivalent. I don't believe that this is the case, i.e., I think the extra material will usually win out, but this view continues to influence chess thinking to some extent even today.

19 ... ♜xg5!

20 ♖xg5 b5! (D)



W

Black already has the bishop pair but his material deficit limits the amount of time he can spend on slow build-ups. The text aims to coordinate the rook with the king's bishop so as to generate an attack on the king. Razuvaev assesses the position as already somewhat better for Black.

21 ♙xd6

Levy prefers 21 ♜he1, on the reasoning that White should not be worried here about acquiring more

material. There is certainly sense to this view in light of the white rook's failure to get developed in subsequent play.

21 ... ♖b8

Gligorić decides to 'go for broke' by remaining down the exchange and a pawn. He could also have played 21... ♖f8!? 22 ♖xc8 ♗h6 23 ♖e7+ (Levy analyses 23 h4?? to a supposed advantage for White but he overlooked 23... ♗xc8 -+) 23... ♗h8 24 ♖xh6 (24 h4 is also possible) 24... ♖xh6+ 25 ♗b1 bxc4 - Mayer. Black has restored nominal material equality but he's running out of attacking pieces and the white d-pawn could become a factor.

22 ♖ge4 h6
23 ♖e3 ♖xe4
24 ♖xe4 bxc4

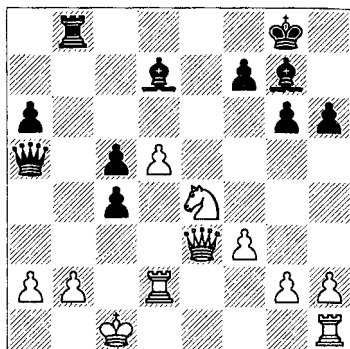
This pawn will prove dangerous throughout the rest of the game, as it can help open up the white king position or support black pieces near the white king.

25 ♖d2 ♖a5 (D)

26 ♗b1

Levy gives 26 ♖a3! ♗xb2+ 27 ♖xb2 ♖xb2 28 ♖xb2 "with an unclear position, possibly favouring White". In fact, after 28... ♖a3! 29 ♗b1 ♖d3+, Black is considerably better, as his queen is active, the king's rook is still unmoved and the c4-pawn is dangerous - Mayer.

26 ... c3
27 ♖c2 ♗d4



W

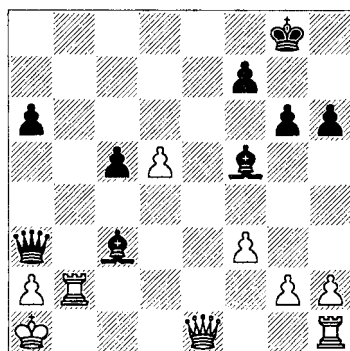
28 ♖e1 ♖a3

29 ♖xc3 ♗f5

Gligorić could play 29... ♖xb2+ at once but he prefers to activate his bishop and threaten mate in one.

30 ♗a1 ♖xb2!

31 ♖xb2 ♗xc3 (D)



W

32 ♖c1?

Levy doesn't comment on this move but it strikes me as an obvious error. White should have played to keep his queen active with 32

♖e8+ ♔g7 33 ♜b8 c4 34 ♜c1, with the idea of establishing a blockade at c2 once the black pawn reaches c3 – Mayer.

Black's second exchange sacrifice makes a pleasing impression. If one remembers my suggestion at the beginning of the chapter that a pair of active bishops can be accorded a value of almost nine points in some circumstances, then it should be clear that Black effectively has near material equality in much of the play that follows.

32 ... c4

33 d6

Levy relates that many commentators gave 33 g4 as White's best, but he dismisses it on the grounds of 33...♙d7 34 ♙b1 ♙xb2 35 ♜xb2 ♜xf3, when Black is doing quite well, as 36 ♜e1 c3 deactivates the white queen. However, it seems to me that White has better in 34 ♜f1!?, with the idea of holding together the kingside pawns. Another idea is 33...♙xb2+ 34 ♜xb2 ♜xf3 35 ♜e1 ♙d7 (35...c3?? 36 ♜b8+) 36 ♜d4!, when the white pieces have gained some much-needed activity, since 36...♜xg4?? loses the queen to 37 ♜e8+ – Mayer.

33 ... ♙f6

34 ♜d1 c3

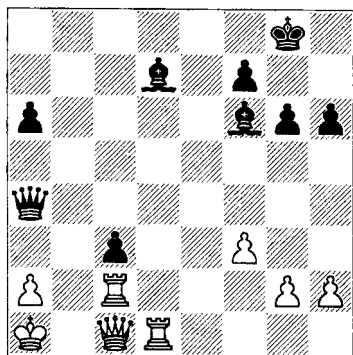
35 ♜c2

Levy points out the pretty 35 ♜b8+ ♔g7 36 ♜xa3 c2+.

35 ... ♜a4

36 d7!

♙xd7 (D)



W

37 g4?

Levy asks the rhetorical question "How does Black make progress after 37 ♜xd7! ♜xd7?" and I agree with him. The problem, of course, is that he no longer has any way to raise the blockade at c2, so a draw is a reasonable result. However, Hort was in severe time pressure, so it's understandable that he missed his best chance.

37 ... ♙e6

38 ♜e1 ♙b3

Teasing White. Levy claims that 38...♙xa2! is a blunder, but he missed 39 ♜xa2 c2+ 40 ♜b2 ♜f4! (instead of Levy's 40...♙xb2+?, which he considers equal) and 41...c1♜+ will mate – Mayer.

39 ♜ee2

The power of the bishops is illustrated by 39 ♜e4 ♙xc2! 40 ♜xa4 ♙xa4 41 a3 ♙b3! and White can resign – Mayer.

39 ... ♖xa2

40 ♗xh6

Or 40 ♜e4 ♕c4+ 41 ♔b1 ♗b3+
42 ♔a1 ♕d3, winning – Mayer.

40 ... ♕c4+

41 ♔b1 ♕xe2

0-1

Verdict: The sacrifice for active bishops is difficult to study in a systematic manner. However, a pair of active bishops is frequently adequate compensation for a pawn – or even the exchange – in a mid-game position.

13 The Unexpected Exchange

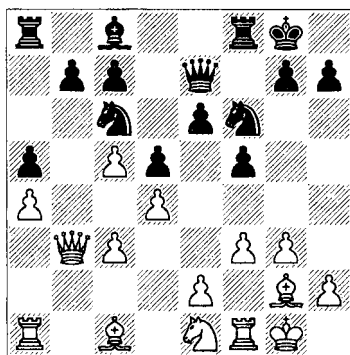
One of the basic principles of chess strategy is to exchange one's less active pieces for the opponent's more active pieces, while avoiding the trade of one's more active pieces. When the pieces in question are the same, it is generally simple to realize whether one should exchange or avoid the exchange, as the pieces have the same characteristics. If the opponent's piece is more effective or has better prospects than ours, we exchange; otherwise, not.

However, bishops and knights are a more difficult matter to judge, as the pieces are accorded the same material value (three points) while having very different characteristics. One of the most difficult things to see is when an apparently well-placed minor piece should be exchanged for an apparently less active one that has different characteristics. Such manoeuvres might best be remembered under the heading of 'the unexpected exchange'. Since such unexpected exchanges appear to defy 'common sense', it is fruitless to discuss them as general cases, so let's move directly to concrete examples.

Bronstein – Boleslavsky
Moscow, Candidates' Play-Off
Match (14) 1950

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 ♘f3 d6 5 ♚b3 a5 6 g3 ♘c6 7 ♙g2 ♘e4 8 0-0 ♙xc3 9 bxc3 0-0 10 ♘e1 f5 11 f3 ♘f6 12 a4 ♚e7 13 c5! d5 (D)

Black's pawn structure would be fractured after 13...dxc5? 14 ♙a3, as 14...♘d7 15 ♘d3 regains the pawn with advantage.



W

14 ♙g5 h6

Black runs into trouble after 14...e5!? 15 e4!: 15...exd4 16 exd5 or 15...fxe4 16 fxe4, with the threat 17 exd5 – Mayer.

15 ♙xf6 ♚xf6

16 ♖d3 b6!

Bronstein has created a position where he has the better minor pieces. If Boleslavsky were to sit quietly, Bronstein would soon step up the pressure with e2-e4, aiming to open up the position.

17 cxb6 ♖b8

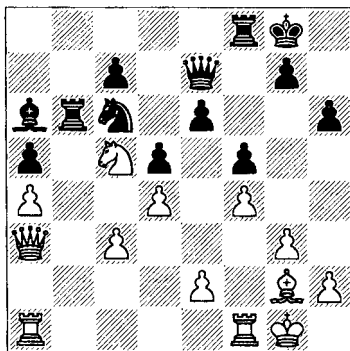
18 ♖a3 ♖xb6

19 f4

Bronstein decides to seal the centre on account of the activity soon to be displayed by the bishop at a6.

19 ... ♗a6

20 ♖c5 ♖e7 (D)



W

21 ♖xa6!!

The knight, which looked like a much better piece than the 'bad' bishop at a6, willingly exchanges itself. However, Black intended to place his bishop at c4, in which case the white bishop would be locked out of play by the pawn at d5. Moreover, Black would have

'built-in' counterplay along the b-file. As Bronstein remarked, "It was not easy to find a weakness in Boleslavsky's superb classical strategy."

Why was Bronstein able to find the correct continuation when most players – even many grandmasters – would not have? I believe there are two reasons. First of all, he was a strategist who did not hesitate to play moves that might 'look wrong', but that in fact met the needs of a specific position. Yet more important, I think, is the fact that he refused to 'lull himself to sleep' with pretty words. It's an easy matter to try to turn chess into a 'war of words' rather than a war of moves. The words sound so right: 'His bishop is bad, as there are many pawns fixed on the light squares. Meanwhile, my knight is a tower of strength, as it occupies a hole where it can live for life.' Such an approach works in many positions but this strictly verbal approach will always fail to find the exceptions to the general case.

21 ... ♖xa6

Black can't ease his defensive problems by swapping queens with 21... ♖xa3 22 ♖xa3 ♖xa6, as then White secures a solid advantage with 23 ♖b1 ♖b6 24 ♖b5 ♖fb8 25 ♖c5 ♖f7 26 e3 ♖e7 27 c4, when "it is obvious that the strong pawn on d5 has become very weak." – Bronstein.

One of the main features of the knight for bishop exchange is that White will be able to activate his bishop with a later c3-c4.

22 ♖c5!

Bronstein follows up with another insightful move. Now a queen exchange would leave White with a pawn at c5 that might seem weak. Indeed, this is certainly what 'pretty words' would tell one. In fact, the pawn would rob a black rook of the b6-square and would prove next to impossible to attack. One of the central tenets of modern chess is 'a weakness that cannot be attacked is not a weakness' and that would certainly be the case with the white pawn at c5.

22 ... ♖b8
23 ♖fb1 ♖xc5

Bronstein suggests that the simplifying 23...♖xb1+ 24 ♖xb1 ♖xc5 25 dxc5 ♖f8 would have left Black with an easier defence. But what's the rush, as after 24 dxc5 in the game, Black could still reach this variation with 24...♖xb1+, etc.

24 dxc5 ♖f8?!
25 ♖b5 ♖aa8
26 ♖f2 ♖e7
27 ♖e3 ♖g8
28 ♖ab1

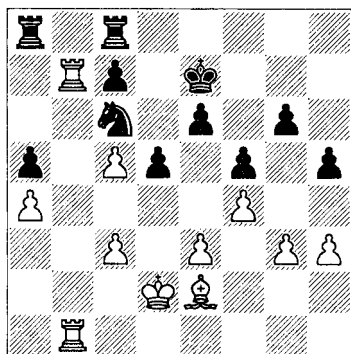
White builds up on the b-file.

28 ... ♖gb8

Better was 28...g5, beginning an active defence, e.g., 29 fxg5 hxg5 30 c4 ♖b4 31 cxd5 ♖xd5+ 32 ♖xd5 exd5 33 ♖d4 ♖h8 34 ♖b7

♖ac8 35 ♖1b3 ♖xh2 36 ♖e3+ ♖d7 37 ♖xd5, when the position is 'a clear draw' – Bronstein.

29 ♖d3 ♖d7
30 e3 ♖e7
31 ♖d2 ♖c8
32 ♖f3 g6
33 ♖e2 h5
34 h3 ♖g8
35 ♖b7 ♖gc8 (D)



W

36 g4

White opens a second front, as Black has done well in defending against an attack based solely on the b-file.

36 ... hxg4
37 hxg4 ♖d8

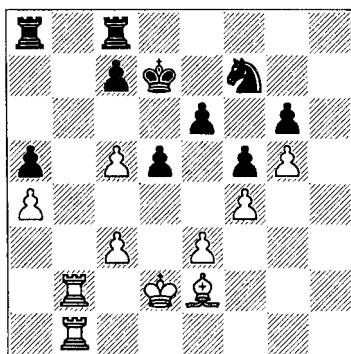
The black knight has the problem that it can't get past the third rank. Boleslavsky brings it over to the kingside, where it defends f7 and shields the second rank against a white rook at h7, but this sort of passive defence is not a knight's great dream in life.

38 ♖b7b2 ♘f7

39 g5

The g-pawn is fixed on a light square, while the e-pawn will also be held in place if Black doesn't watch out.

39 ... ♔d7 (D)



W

40 c4

This is 'positionally decisive', according to Bronstein. The bishop will now gain greater activity and have the opportunity in many variations to get at the weak black pawns. If Black were now to defend with 40...c6, then Bronstein offers the fantastic pawn sacrifice 41 cxd5 exd5 42 e4, which he awards two exclamation marks, as it opens 'useful diagonals for the bishop'. It's true that 42...fxe4 43 ♗g4+ wins the exchange but it seems to me that Black should have tried 42...dxc4 43 ♗c4. The black position is then very loose – there is an especially conspicuous target

at g6 – but this doesn't look to me any worse than what happens in the game 'free of charge' after Black engineers ...e6-e5.

40 ... dxc4

41 ♗f3 ♖a7

42 ♖c3 c6

The knight will now be unable to get any further than e6. Even this unremarkable post will be difficult to reach, since it will require that Black play ...e5, ...♘d8, and ...♘e6. Further, this approach will open the a2-g8 diagonal for the white bishop, which may be able to attack the black g-pawn from f7 in some circumstances.

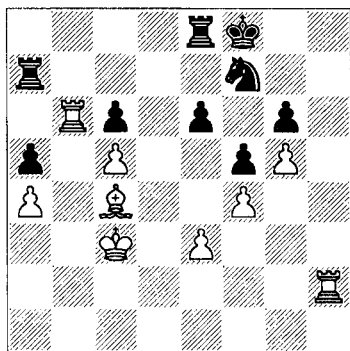
43 ♖h2 ♔e7

44 ♗e2 ♖f8

45 ♗xc4 ♖e8

46 ♖b6 (D)

Culminating the attack begun with 21 ♘xa6!! The white pieces have achieved maximum power and are ready to start collecting the weak black pawns.

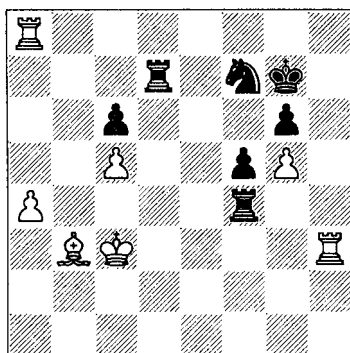


B

46 ... ♖c7
47 ♖a6 ♔g7
48 ♖xa5 e5

Boleslavsky hopes for activity but Bronstein demonstrates that it is too little, too late.

49 ♖h3 ♖d7
50 ♙b3 exf4
51 exf4 ♖e4
52 ♖a8 ♖xf4 (D)



W

53 ♙xf7!

This second 'unexpected exchange', which results in a winning rook and pawn ending, is an amusing echo to the earlier exchange of knight for bishop. Note that Bronstein judges the resulting position on merits; he refuses to lull himself to sleep with 'pretty words'. The game concluded 53...♖xf7 54 ♖ah8 ♖f3+ 55 ♖xf3 ♔xh8 56 a5 ♖a7 57 ♔b4 ♔g7 58 ♖a3 ♖a6 59 ♖d3 ♔f7 60 ♖d6 ♔g7 61 ♖d7+ ♔g8 62 ♔a4 ♔f8 63 ♖b7 f4 64 ♖b4 (the key to White's win is the

fact that the f-pawn must finally start to run, after which it is rounded up by the white rook with no real diminution of White's winning advantage) 64...♔e7 65 ♖xf4 ♔e6 66 ♖f6+ ♔d5 67 ♔b4 1-0

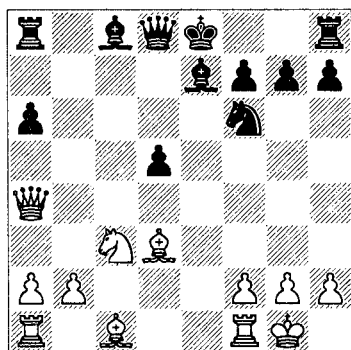
There are chess games that can be regarded as 'companion pieces' to each other. Bronstein-Boleslavsky paves the way for a greater understanding of a later game.

Fischer – Petrosian

Buenos Aires,

Candidates' Match (7) 1971

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 a6 5 ♙d3 ♘c6 6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 0-0 d5 8 c4 ♘f6 9 cxd5 cxd5 10 exd5 exd5 11 ♘c3! ♙e7 12 ♖a4+! (D)



B

12 ... ♖d7?!

Petrosian offers a speculative exchange sacrifice, since 12...♙d7 allows White two continuations:

a) 13 ♖c2! gives Black a wide choice:

a1) 13...0-0 14 ♗g5 d4 is considered favourable to White but playable for Black by both Polugaevsky (cited in Bernard Cafferty's *Candidates' Matches 1971*, as are all the other Soviet annotators quoted on this game) and Speelman in *Best Chess Games 1970-80*.

a2) 13...♗e6 14 ♗g5 h6 15 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 16 ♖a4+ ♖f8 "and although White stands better Black can put up a stubborn defence" – Polugaevsky.

a3) 13...d4!? 14 ♖e4 (14 ♖e2 is better – Polugaevsky) 14...♖xe4 15 ♗xe4 ♞c8 and 16...♗b5 – Polugaevsky.

b) 13 ♖d4 ('! – Botvinnik; Lilienthal) looks even better, as White places his queen in a central location and uses it on the dark squares. As every beginner is taught, the queen combines the movements of the rook and bishop. In fact, it is more accurate to say that the queen combines the movements of the rook and the *potential* movements of *both* bishops. In the position at hand, Black is weak on the dark squares, so it makes perfect sense to put the queen to work on the dark squares.

13 ♞e1!

Fischer cuts to the heart of the position, as he did so often in his best games. Petrosian was hoping for the materialistic 13 ♗b5?! axb5

14 ♖xa8 0-0, when Speelman calls the position 'extremely messy'.

Lilienthal analyses further with 15 ♖a5 d4 16 ♖xb5 ♗b7, when Black has threats of 17...♞a8 and 17...♗xg2, which will open up the king for a perpetual on the light squares, e.g., 18 ♖xg2 ♖g4+.

Fischer will have none of such nonsense; instead, he takes play into an extremely favourable ending.

13 ...	♖xa4
14 ♖xa4	♗e6
15 ♗e3	0-0

Petrosian must consent to the exchange of his good bishop, since 15...♖d7 16 f4! g6 17 ♗d4 (17 ♗c2 is good according to Lilienthal) 17...0-0 18 ♞ac1 is very good for White, as given by both Averbakh and Speelman.

16 ♗c5!

Fischer has a certain type of positional advantage in mind and he won't be distracted by anything else:

a) 16 ♖b6 ♞ab8 17 ♗xa6 ♗d8 18 ♖a4 d4 'gives Black the initiative' – Botvinnik.

b) 16 ♖c5 a5! 17 ♗d4 ♗xc5 18 ♗xc5 – Botvinnik. This variation favours White but Botvinnik points out that it involves tempo loss (17 ♗d4 and then 18 ♗xc5) and allows Black to sneak in 16...a5!, when the a-pawn is not as weak as in the game and serves to restrain White's queenside majority.

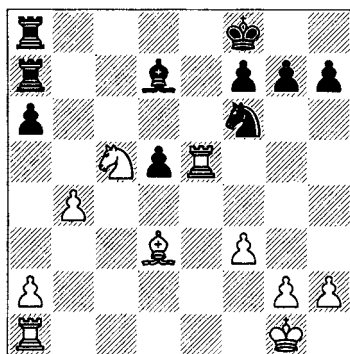
16 ... ♖fe8
 17 ♙xe7 ♖xe7
 18 b4! ♖f8
 19 ♘c5 ♙c8
 20 f3!

This takes away e4 from the black knight and clears a path to the centre for the white king.

20 ... ♗ea7?

This was Black's last chance to set up a defence and he misses it. Botvinnik suggests 20...♖xe1+ 21 ♖xe1 ♗e8 22 ♖f2 ♘c7 23 ♗e3 ♗e7 24 ♗d4+ ♗d6 "and the worst is behind Black once his knight is on c7".

21 ♖e5! ♙d7 (D)



W

22 ♘xd7+!!

A sensational move, even for a player acquainted with Bronstein-Boleslavsky. It's clear that the white knight was a tremendous piece, while the black bishop had few chances for activity. Then why did Fischer so willingly exchange his 'superior' minor piece?

The key lies in my remark that the bishop 'had few chances for activity'. Does the bishop *need* to be active to be a useful piece? No, it doesn't: "For although it was 'bad', the bishop was holding together the black position. After its exchange, the white rooks can show their paces in a way which was not possible before." – Speelman.

Polugaevsky adds the enlightening remark that Fischer often used the method of 'transforming one advantage into another'. Imagine for the moment that chess is mathematics and that at least to some extent chess positions are maths problems. There can be no doubt that Fischer would have maintained a solid advantage even if he hadn't exchanged his knight for the bishop, but in doing so, he is effectively 'simplifying the equation' and making the solution to the problem that much easier.

22 ... ♖xd7

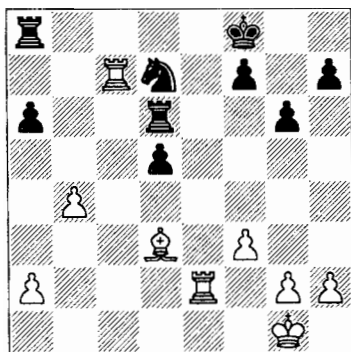
23 ♖c1 ♖d6

This cedes the seventh rank to the white rook but the immediate threat was 24 ♖c6. Fischer is now able to reach an overwhelming position, as his rooks achieve tremendous activity, Black's knight remains inactive and the white bishop has its choice of targets, most notably a6 and d5.

24 ♖c7 ♘d7

25 ♖e2 ♗g6 (D)

"Black is in a sort of zugzwang. 25...a5 would be met by 26 b5 and 25...♖b6 allows the other white rook to occupy the seventh rank." – Polugaevsky.



W

26 ♖f2 h5

In Botvinnik's view, Black's last chance was to 'try for some counterplay' with 26...♖b8 27 a3 a5 28 b5 a4.

27 f4 h4

Both Speelman and Polugaevsky suggest 27...♗b6 28 ♖ee7 ♖f6, when the latter remarks that Black can hope to 'complicate matters'.

28 ♖f3 f5
29 ♖e3 d4+

White also wins after the somewhat superior 29...♗f6 30 ♖d4 ♗e4 31 ♖ec2, which is evaluated as winning by both Speelman and Polugaevsky.

30 ♖d2 ♗b6

Speelman gives 30...a5 31 bxa5 ♖xa5 32 ♖c8+ ♖g7 33 ♖c4 ♖f6

34 ♖ce8! as winning for White. Further, he points out that the position is a kind of zugzwang, as a move by the rook at a8 allows 31 ♖a7, while 30...♖d5 31 ♖e6 is also winning.

31 ♖ee7 ♗d5
32 ♖f7+ ♖e8
33 ♖b7 ♗xb4
34 ♖c4 1-0

White will soon mate with 35 ♖g7 or 35 ♖h7.

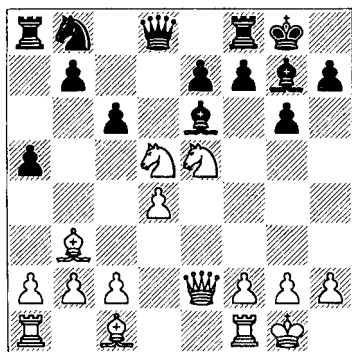
Cafferty relates that Fischer considered this his best game of the Petrosian match.

There seem to be fewer examples of the unexpected exchange of bishop for knight. This is probably a function of the pieces: it may take a knight many moves to reach a really excellent square, while the bishop that it eventually eliminates may have moved only once or twice, as we saw in the above examples. Similarly, a well-placed bishop may not even have moved in a game, as bishops are long-range pieces and consequently can be 'developed', i.e., accomplishing really important things, even when they sit unmoved upon their original squares.

E. Jimenez – Larsen
Palma de Mallorca 1967

1 e4 ♗f6 2 e5 ♗d5 3 ♗f3 d6 4 d4 dxe5 5 ♗xe5 g6 6 ♖c4 ♖e6 7 ♖b3

♙g7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♖c2 a5 10 ♘c3 c6
11 ♘xd5? (D)



B

"I do not understand such moves!" – Larsen in *Larsen's Selected Games of Chess 1948-69*.

The text allows Black to develop his knight to c6 and also gives him play against White's queenside.

11 ... cxd5

12 a4?

This simply weakens White's queenside further. Larsen gives 12 c3 as better, although he remarks that Black has "an excellent position".

12 ... ♘c6

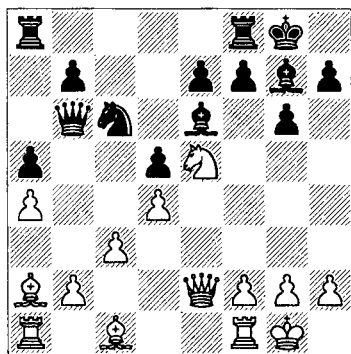
13 c3 ♖b6

14 ♙a2 (D)

14 ... ♙xe5!!

"Jimenez was very surprised and afterwards expressed his admiration." – Larsen.

The text is an extremely unexpected exchange. It's true that the white knight is well placed in the



B

centre but the black bishop was not poorly placed and would seem to be an excellent defender. However, Larsen has a very powerful continuation in mind.

15 dxe5 d4!

"Advantage for Black! He has the initiative in the centre and both the white king's pawn and his pawns on the queenside are weak." – Larsen.

It may surprise the inexperienced player to learn that White's e-pawn is weak, while Larsen makes no comment concerning the possible weakness of Black's pending doubled e-pawns. Modern grandmasters have demonstrated repeatedly that 'a weakness is not a weakness' if it cannot be exploited – and that is the case here. Furthermore, the twin exchanges of minor pieces will leave White with an unremarkable bishop against a knight that has a rosy future, as it applies pressure to the e-pawn and has

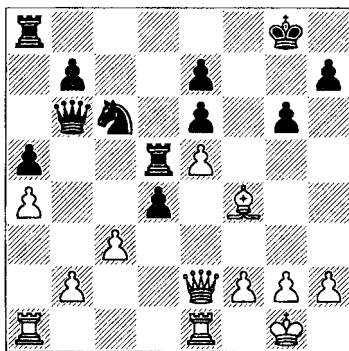
chances of obtaining even greater activity.

16 ♖h6

Jimenez decides to pursue some vague chances against the black king. It might have been better to go after the e6-pawn immediately with 16 ♖xe6 fxe6 17 ♜c4!? (17 ♖h6 is pointless now, because Black replies 17...♜f5) 17...♘xe5 18 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 19 cxd4 ♘c6, when Black has the better minor piece and it's likely that the d-pawn will prove weaker than the e-pawns – Mayer.

But even so, it's likely that this position would dissolve to a rook and pawn ending in which Black has a weak e-pawn(s), so there would certainly be defensive chances for White.

16 ... ♜fd8
17 ♖xe6 fxe6
18 ♜fe1 ♜d5
19 ♖f4 (D)



B

As Larsen points out, White would suffer if he lost the e-pawn because of the central posts that Black's pieces would gain as a result.

19 ... ♜f8

20 g3

A really ugly move. Larsen speculates that White played it so as to keep the d2-square under observation in the event that Black decides to push his d-pawn.

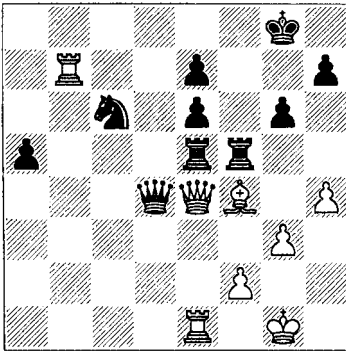
20 ... ♜f5

21 ♜ad1?

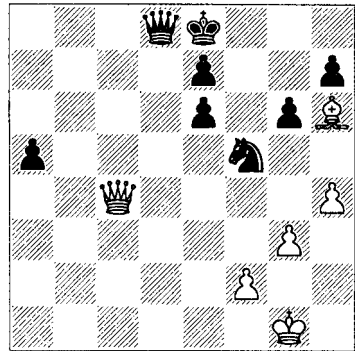
White misses an interesting chance here. Larsen considers 21 h4 'relatively best', but then adds 21...d3 22 ♜d2 ♜d8!, with the point that the e-pawn drops after 23 ♜ad1? ♘xe5 24 ♖xe5 ♜fxe5 25 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 26 ♜xd3??, when Black has the choice of winning a rook by 26...♜d5 or 26...♜e1+.

But what if White plays *good* moves? For starters, he might try for activity with 23 ♜e3! ♘xe5 24 b3!. Now that the knight has been deprived of forks, 25 ♜ae1 has become a legitimate threat, while 25 c4 may also be annoying – Mayer. Note also that the d-pawn is going nowhere for now.

21 ... ♜b3!
22 h4 ♜xa4
23 ♜e4 ♜b3
24 cxd4 ♜xb2
25 ♜b1 ♜xd4
26 ♜xb7 ♜dxe5! (D)
27 ♜b1



W



W

Forced, as Black wins after 27
 ♖xe5 ♜xf2+ 28 ♔h1 ♜xe5 –
 Larsen.

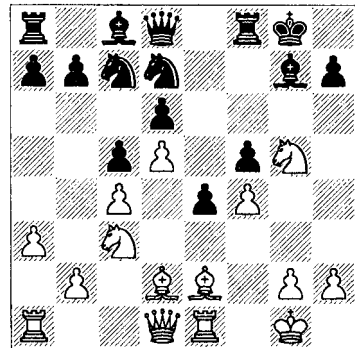
- | | |
|----------|---------|
| 27 ... | ♜xe1+ |
| 28 ♜xe1 | ♜d5 |
| 29 ♜c1 | ♞d4 |
| 30 ♜b8+ | ♜f8 |
| 31 ♜xf8+ | ♞xf8 |
| 32 ♞h6+ | ♞e8 |
| 33 ♜c8+ | ♜d8 |
| 34 ♜c4 | ♞f5 (D) |

The game has settled down into
 a lost ending for White. It con-
 cluded 35 ♞f4 ♞f7 36 ♞e5 ♜d1+
 37 ♞h2 ♜d2 38 ♜c5 a4 39 ♞c3
 ♜c2 40 ♞g1 ♜d1+ 41 ♞h2 ♜d5
 42 ♜b4 ♜f3 43 ♞g1 a3! 0-1

White is out of luck, as 44 ♜xa3
 ♞d4! wins the bishop or gives
 mate – Larsen.

There can also come a time
 when the ‘unexpected’ exchange
 loses its surprise value, as the par-
 ticular manoeuvre becomes an ac-
 cepted part of middlegame theory.

Bronstein – Petrosian
Amsterdam, Candidates’
Tournament 1956

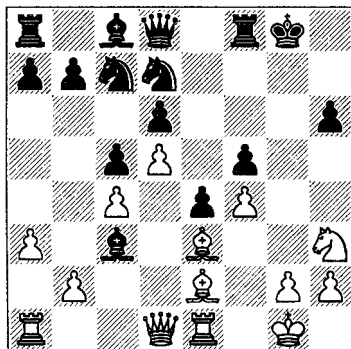


W

Black’s centre pawns have been
 forced into a formation that is gen-
 erally not considered favourable in
 the King’s Indian. Despite a pro-
 tected passed centre pawn, Black
 has the problem that White can
 eventually place a knight at e3 and
 undermine the f5-e4 pawn chain
 with g2-g4. This may also result in

White gaining the initiative on the kingside.

16 ♖e3 h6
17 ♘h3 ♙xc3! (D)



W

This exchange, now widely accepted in this type of King's Indian position, appears to have been played for the first time in this game. Black parts with his impressive bishop, but eliminates White's

chances of operating on the queenside with a later b2-b4. Further, the white c-pawns may prove a problem, as in a Nimzo-Indian. Finally, it is critical that Black controls d4, so White never has any means of getting his dark-squared bishop on the long diagonal.

In the subsequent play, Bronstein proved unable to demonstrate any real advantage, as Petrosian concentrated his forces in the centre and on the kingside: 18 bxc3 ♘f6 19 a4 ♙h8 20 ♘f2 ♖g8 21 ♙h1 ♕e8 22 ♖g1 ♗g6 23 ♗d2 ♙d7 24 g3 ♖ae8 25 a5 ♖e7 26 ♖ab1 ♙c8 27 ♖g2 ♖eg7 28 ♖bg1 ♘ce8 29 h3 h5 1/2-1/2

Verdict: The Unexpected Exchange of a well-placed minor piece for another type of minor piece is something that must always be remembered as a possibility.

14 Shattered Pawn Positions

The most common case of a bishop being given up for a knight is when a doubled pawn is created. In and of themselves, simple doubled pawn positions are too common for us to consider. Further, a doubled pawn may not even be a real weakness, e.g., the cluster a7-b7-c7-c6 that arises in a variety of Ruy Lopezes has drawbacks, but the susceptibility of the pawns to direct attack is rarely one of them.

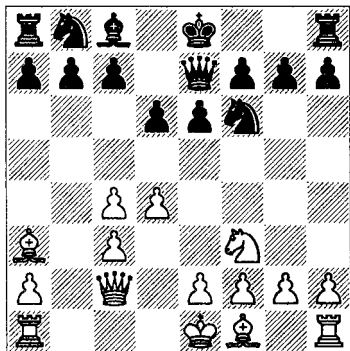
However, there are many cases where a doubled pawn is *very* weak, for example, the cluster c3-c4-d4 that White takes on in a variety of lines in the Nimzo-Indian Defence. These 'shattered pawn' positions can be compared to gambits, i.e., the player with the lousy pawn structure has dynamic compensation (the bishops), but time is not on his side, as his shattered pawns will result in his defeat if he proves unable to make something of his dynamic advantage. Such positions are difficult to treat in a systematic fashion, as having shattered pawns is always unfavourable in general. This chapter is the longest in the book, but the reader should realize that we won't come close to exhausting the subject.

Further, we are only considering those cases where one side or the other has pawns that are weak and *susceptible to attack*.

One thing that many players don't realize about weakened pawn structures is that they also carry *square* weaknesses in their wake. Indeed, as Nimzowitsch demonstrates in the following game, it is much easier to undouble a pawn than to restore pawn protection to a hole.

Mattison – Nimzowitsch Karlsbad 1929

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4
♗f3 ♙xc3+!? 5 bxc3 d6 6 ♚c2
♚e7 7 ♙a3?! (D)



Mattison hopes to undouble his c-pawn by playing 8 c5, but this can be prevented, after which his bishop will prove misplaced.

7 ... c5

8 g3?

In general, the bishop should be developed to d3, as then it defends the weakened c4-pawn and makes it easier to expand in the centre with e4. Further, it might be possible to translate the bishop's placement into a later kingside attack.

8 ... b6

9 ♖g2 ♖b7

10 0-0 0-0

11 ♜h4 ♖xg2

12 ♖xg2?

Now White's knight remains out of play. A superior approach was 12 ♜xg2, followed by 13 e4 and 14 ♖e3, when the knight defends c4 and could obtain active chances from its central post.

12 ... ♗b7+

13 ♔g1 ♗a6!

14 ♗b3 ♘c6

15 ♗fd1 ♘a5

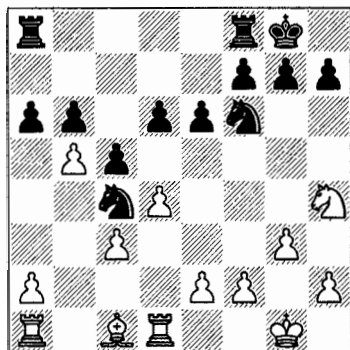
16 ♗b5 ♗xb5

17 cxb5 ♘c4

Here we see an important discovery of Nimzowitsch's. Earlier, White had a weak pawn that was subject to attack at c4. Mattison managed to undouble it, i.e., make it 'healthy' again, but the weakness of the *square* c4 is left behind. Thus, while White's pawns are now back in one island, he has

numerous weak points that the black knights can attack.

18 ♖c1 a6! (D)



W

Fully in accordance with the principle that one should open lines in the part of the board where one has the advantage.

19 bxa6 ♗xa6

20 dxc5 bxc5

White's pawns, which were one body as recently as move 18, are now separated into three islands. The *holes* in White's pawn structure caused by the initial doubling of the c-pawns remained after the pawns were undoubled and optically free of weakness. The c3-pawn is now 'weak' to the naked eye, as it is isolated, but it was weak even when White had pawns at b5 and d4, as the square was a hole.

21 ♘g2 ♘d5

22 ♗d3 ♗fa8

23 e4 ♘e5!

0-1

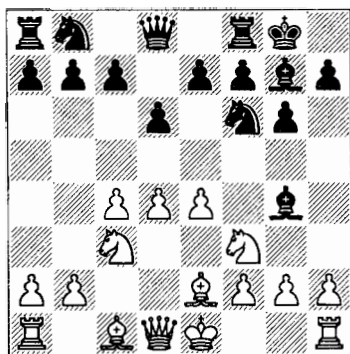
White loses three pawns after 24 ♖d1 ♜xc3 25 ♜f1 ♜xa2 26 ♜xa2 ♜f3+! 27 ♚h1 ♜xa2 , when the e-pawn will also go.

Nimzowitsch's games in the Nimzo-Indian are very influential. Sometimes the ideas even pop up in other openings.

Cuellar – Tal

Leningrad Interzonal 1973

1 ♜f3 d6 2 d4 ♜f6 3 c4 g6 4 ♜c3
 ♜g7 5 e4 0-0 6 ♙e2 ♙g4 (D)



W

This is an instance of Changing the Colour of a Bishop, as Black is prepared to exchange his light-squared bishop for the knight at f3, which guards the dark-square hole at d4. This sensible move has been used by at least four world champions (Botvinnik, Petrosian, Spassky and Tal).

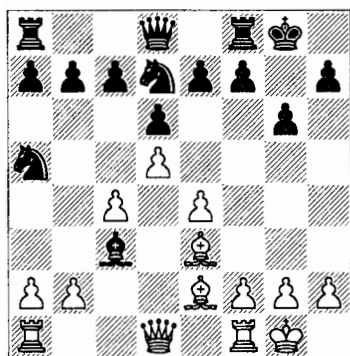
7 0-0

One refinement that White can try is 7 ♙e3 ♜fd7 8 ♜c1! , which takes prophylactic action against a possible exchange at c3. However, this line was still relatively unexplored in 1973 and the dangers associated with an exchange at c3 were not yet known.

7 ... ♜fd7
 8 ♙e3 ♜xf3
 9 ♜xf3 ♜c6

Black now has three minor pieces that can potentially attack the hole at d4, while White has only two.

10 d5 ♜a5!
 11 ♙e2 ♙xc3! (D)



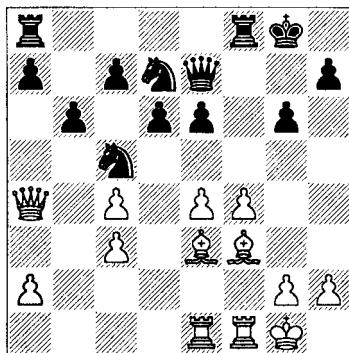
W

This might be seen as an example of an Unexpected Exchange, as Black trades off his apparently powerful fianchettoed bishop. However, in return, Black inflicts doubled c-pawns that will be prone to attack and also secures c5 as a permanent square for his knights.

12 **bxc3** **e5!**
 13 **dxe6**

A difficult decision, for while it makes sense to 'open the game for the bishops', their scope is not really increased by this exchange, while Black regains the e5-square for manoeuvring. Yet alternatives result in the position remaining closed, which would certainly delight the knights.

13 ... **fxe6**
 14 **f4** **W**e7
 15 **W**a4 **b6**
 16 **W**ae1 **Q**b7
 17 **Q**f3 **Q**bc5 (D)



W

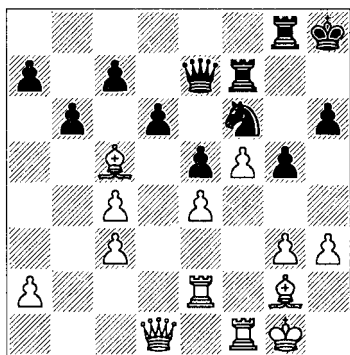
White faces a dilemma in what follows. It's true that he has two bishops versus two knights, but the fact that the knights have a good square on the colour of White's good bishop will tempt an exchange at c5, after which White's remaining bishop is extremely bad.

18 **W**c2 **W**ae8

19 **g3** **W**f7
 20 **Q**g2 **W**ef8
 21 **Q**h3 **Q**h8
 22 **W**e2 **e5!**
 23 **f5** **g5!**

Both sides have set their sights on the centre. White's failure to open the game has dire repercussions for him, for while he has gained a protected passed pawn at f5, his king's bishop has become even worse and the pawn at e4 is now a fixed weakness.

24 **Q**g2 **W**g8
 25 **h3** **h6**
 26 **W**d1 **Q**f6
 27 **Q**xc5 (D)



B

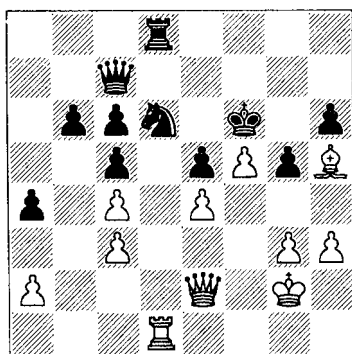
The game enters a new phase. White manages to double the black c-pawns, but he is now left in a good knight versus bad bishop game.

27 ... **dx**c5
 28 **W**d2 **Q**e8
 29 **W**d8 **W**gf8

30	♖a8	a5
31	♗f3	♘d6
32	♕d5	♙xa8
33	♕xa8+	♙f8
34	♕c6	♙f6

White made an effort to break into the black position via the d-file, but the net result has been further simplification.

35	♕d5	♙g7
36	♙d1	♙f8
37	♗h5	♙d8
38	♕c6	♙f6
39	♙g2	♕d7
40	♕d5	♕e7
41	♕c6	♕d7
42	♕d5	c6
43	♕d3	♕c7
44	♕e2	a4 (D)



W

45 a3

The a-pawn will subsequently prove difficult to defend, but the alternative was to allow yet another pawn to be fixed on a light square by a subsequent ...a4-a3. Now Tal

sets about mobilizing his queenside majority; the fact that both sides have broken queenside pawns allows him to create a passed pawn.

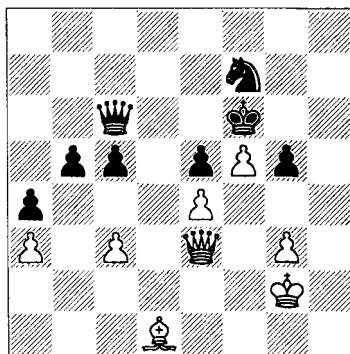
45	...	b5
46	cx b5	cx b5
47	♕d3	♕c6
48	h4	

Cuellar tries to stir up some action on the kingside. Black is too well placed in the centre for White to make progress there, e.g., 48 ♕d5!? ♕xd5 49 ♙xd5 ♘b7 50 ♙xd8 ♘xd8 51 ♗e8 b4, with the division:

a) 52 cxb4? cxb4 53 ♗xa4 bxa3 54 ♗b3 ♘c6 and the black a-pawn nets a piece – Mayer.

b) 52 ♗xa4 bxa3 53 ♗b3 is better, as the black knight doesn't have access to b4 and d4 – Burgess.

48	...	♘f7
49	hxg5+	hxg5
50	♕e3	♙xd1
51	♗xd1 (D)	



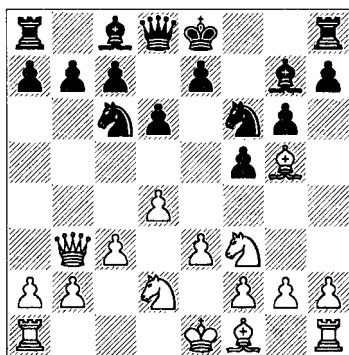
B

White's chances of disturbing the flow of the game have dwindled to practically zero. It's true that the presence of queens may allow a swindle, but it also allows Tal to pursue the advantages of Capablanca's Ending (see Chapter 17) while maintaining the safety net of a winning minor-piece ending. The conclusion, while interesting, did not really offer White any practical chances of saving his position: 51...♖d6 52 ♙c2 b4 53 ♖h3 b3 54 ♙b1 c4 55 ♖g4 ♗f7 56 ♖f3 ♗d6 57 ♗c1 ♖g7 58 ♙e2 ♗h6 59 ♗g1 ♗h5+ 60 ♙e3 ♗d6 61 ♖d2 ♗f3 62 ♗c5?! (better practical chances were offered by 62 ♗a7+, since 62...♙f6 63 ♗b6 forces Black to take perpetual check due to the threat 64 ♗c7+, while 62...♙f8 63 ♗b8+ is also a mistake; however, after 62...♗f7 63 ♗g1 g4!, White is lost, as his pawns can't be held in the long run) 62...♗g2+ 63 ♙c1 b2+ 64 ♙d1 ♗f1+ 65 ♙d2 ♗f7 (Black also wins with 65...♗xb1, when it appears that his king can escape perpetual check; however, Tal's pragmatic decision is understandable, as one must always be cautious about a mistake near the end of a long game) 66 ♙a2 ♗d3+ 67 ♙e1 ♗xc3+ 68 ♙f1 ♗f3+ 69 ♙g1 ♗xg3+ 70 ♙h1 ♗e1+ 71 ♙h2 ♗d2+ 72 ♙h3 g4+ 73 ♙xg4 ♗f4+ 74 ♙h3 ♗g5+ 75 ♙g2 ♗xe4+ 76 ♙h2 ♗c2+ 77 ♙h1 b1♗+ 78 ♙xb1 ♗xb1+ 79 ♙h2 ♗f3+ 0-1

It's also possible for shattered pawns to be a problem in more open positions. In the following game, one can always point to open diagonals for the bishops, but they never seem to reach them.

Petrosian – A. Nielsen
Copenhagen 1960

1 d4 f5 2 ♙g5 g6 3 ♗d2 ♙g7 4 c3 ♗f6 5 e3 d6 6 ♗g3 ♗c6?! 7 ♗b3! (D)



B

A good 'nagging move'. White delays Black's castling and tempts him to alter the pawn structure with ...d6-d5. Given the further course of the game, it seems that Black would have done better to castle at move six.

7 ... h6?!

It's mistaken to chase after the bishop pair when the black king is not in a position to castle. More prudent was 7...e6!?, when Black

can meet 8 e4 with 8...fxe4 9 ♖xe4 h6.

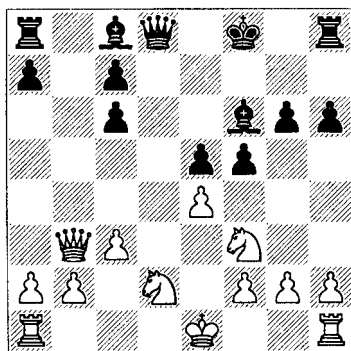
8 ♖xf6 ♖xf6
9 e4

Petrosian plays to open the position against the uncastled king. This manoeuvre, in conjunction with the exchange of bishop for knight, also has the effect of speeding up the white knights. It's also important that the black king's bishop 'bites on granite' in the form of the pawn chain b2-c3-d4.

9 ... e5
10 ♖b5! ♖f8

Black faces the fact that he won't be able to castle by normal means, as 10...♖d7 11 d5 wins material.

11 ♖xc6 bxc6
12 dxe5 dxe5 (D)



W

Black has obtained two bishops vs two knights at the cost of great damage to his pawn structure, but he has not had to yield any obviously good square to the white

knights. However, Petrosian is able to demonstrate in what follows that the black position is very poor already, and quite possibly lost.

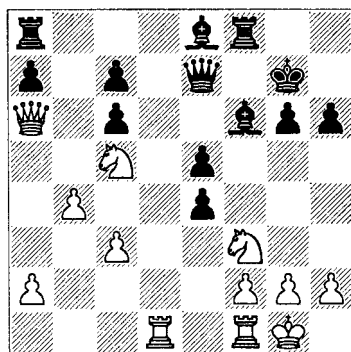
13 ♖a4!

This apparently crude attack has a more subtle point: White will manoeuvre his knight to the most advanced square it can reach, i.e., c5. A strategist of lesser ability might have been satisfied with the c4-square.

13 ... ♖d6
14 ♖b3 ♖d7
15 ♖d1 ♖e7
16 ♖c5 ♖e8
17 b4 ♖g7

Black's bishops haven't managed to gain any meaningful activity, thus his position must be regarded as lost in view of his wrecked queenside pawns and the general looseness in his kingside.

18 0-0 ♖f8
19 ♖a6 fxe4 (D)

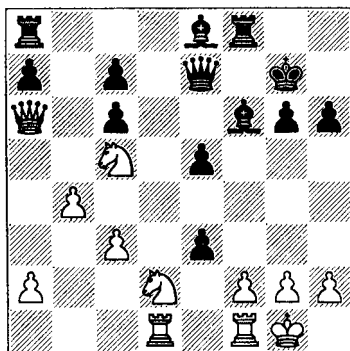


W

20 ♖d2!

The knight at c5 is already placed optimally, so Petrosian strives to improve the placing of its colleague.

20 ... e3 (D)



W

21 ♖de4! exf2+

22 ♖xf2

Threatening to win the bishop by doubling rooks on the f-file.

22 ... ♗g5

23 ♖xf8 ♖xf8

24 ♖xg5 hxg5

25 ♜b7 1-0

Black has no interest in watching the white a-pawn march down the board. An excellent, if one-sided, demonstration of knights vs bishops in a shattered pawn setting.

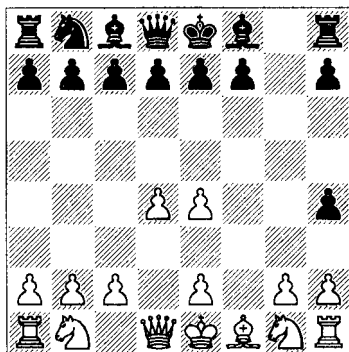
The side with the shattered pawns doesn't always lose. Some bishops (generally fianchettoed kings' bishops) are so active that a premium is placed on them. In

many defences, e.g., the King's Indian or certain Sicilians, it is common for Black to sacrifice a pawn if he can obtain a dark-squared bishop for a knight. It should really come as no surprise that players are also willing to accept a broken pawn structure, assuming that they get an unopposed bishop with a bright future ahead of it.

Reichenbach – Sosonko

Mannheim 1975

1 d4 ♖f6 2 ♗g5 ♖e4 3 ♗h4 g5!? 4 f3!? gxf4 5 fxe4 (D)



B

White has given up the bishop pair, but has a pretty centre and has left Black with a degraded king-side. In return, Black has the bishop pair and the white position is exposed to attack on the dark squares. Black's mission now is to disrupt the white centre and open a line for his queen for dark-square

operations. The move 5...c5 is seen frequently, but Black has another logical approach available.

5 ... e5!?

6 ♖f3!?

This position is little explored, so it's hard to be certain what's White's best move. 6 e3 looks reasonable, but then 6...♖g5 and 7...♙h6 causes him problems. Another way of propping up the centre is 6 c3, but this has the drawback of taking away the queen's knight's most natural square.

6 ... exd4

7 ♖xd4 ♙g8

8 ♖c3

Also possible is 8 ♖e5+ ♖e7 9 ♖xc7 ♖a6, and now 10 ♖e5 looks better for White. Instead, Keitlinghaus-Knaak, Bundesliga 1991 continued 10 ♖c4 b5 11 ♖d5 (there's no obvious objection to 11 ♖xb5, as 11...♙b8 12 ♖c4 stops 12...♙xb2) 11...♖c7 12 ♖d3 ♙b7 13 ♖c3 ♙h6 14 ♖d4 ♙g5, and here 15 ♖f5! +- would have won the exchange.

However, Black can look for improvements with 9...♖c6 or even 8...♙e7.

8 ... ♖c6

9 ♖d2 d6

10 ♖d5 ♙g7

11 c3 ♖e5

12 ♖d4 c6

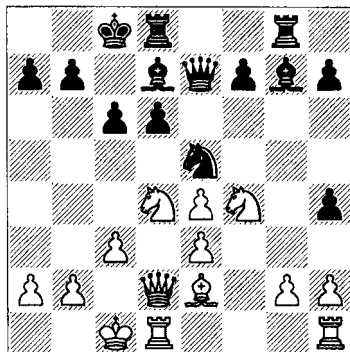
13 ♖f4 ♖g5

Black doesn't accomplish anything special after 13...♖c4 14 ♖c1 ♖b6 15 e3 – Mayer.

14 e3 ♙d7

15 ♙e2 0-0-0

16 0-0-0 ♖e7 (D)



W

The opening is over and Black has every reason to be happy. His king's bishop is a powerhouse, his h-pawn is holding down the white g-pawn and it's difficult for White to draw up a good plan. It's true that he could play ♖f5 at some point, but Black would just chop it off and still have the weakness at e3 to attack.

17 ♙df1 ♙h6

18 h3?

How can this be right? Now the g-pawn is never able to move and the black rook gains a nice square to use in pressing on e3.

18 ... ♙g3

19 ♙f2 ♖g6

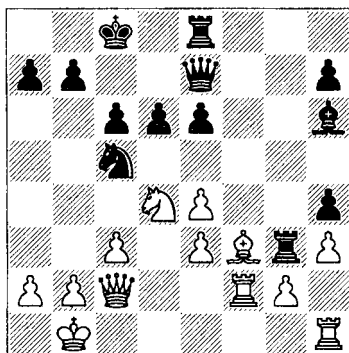
20 ♙f3 ♖e5

21 ♙e2 ♙e6

Sosonko has no objection to an exchange at e6, as that would allow

him to add a centre pawn and use the f-file for kingside operations.

- | | | |
|----|-------|----------|
| 22 | ♔b1 | ♞d7 |
| 23 | ♞f3 | ♞c5 |
| 24 | ♞c2 | ♞e8 |
| 25 | ♞fxe6 | fxe6 (D) |



W

White eliminated the bishop pair, but his reward is a distinctly inferior opposite-coloured bishop midgame.

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 26 | ♞e1 | ♔b8 |
| 27 | ♞d2 | ♞d7 |
| 28 | ♞b3 | ♞e5 |
| 29 | ♞h5 | ♞xe3 |
| 30 | ♞xe3 | ♞xe3 |
| 31 | ♞xe8 | ♞xe8 |
| 32 | ♞xe6 | ♞g6! |
| 33 | ♞xg6 | hxg6 |

Play has come down to a rook and knight ending where Sosonko is able to demonstrate that White's multiple weaknesses (e4 and g2) are decisive: 34 ♞e6 ♞c4 35 ♞f2 a5 36 ♞g5 a4 37 ♞c2 ♞g3 38 ♞f3 ♞e3+ 39 ♞d3 ♞xg2 0-1

Perhaps the secret of this game is that White also had shattered pawns. They don't look significant in the position after White's fifth move, but practice suggests that the pawn weaknesses are severe for both sides.

There are cases where a player already has the bishop pair, perhaps with some degradation of the pawn structure, and further sacrifices pawn structure for the sake of piece activity. This is not as common as one would think. Perhaps the explanation is that the additional degradation of the pawn structure usually allows the other side to do something nice, e.g., win material or break in to the position.

Smyslov – Botvinnik

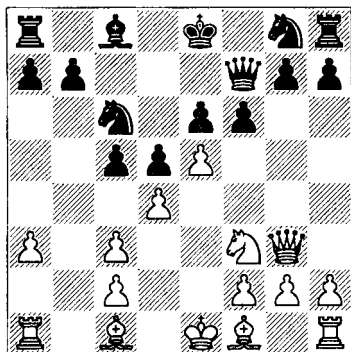
Moscow World Ch Match (20) 1957

- 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♞c3 ♞b4 4 e5 c5
5 a3 ♞xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♞c7 7 ♞g4 f6
8 ♞f3 ♞c6 9 ♞g3 ♞f7? (D)

In *World Chess Championship 1957*, Golombek suggests the superior 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 ♞f7.

10 dxc5!?

"With two bishops, White naturally wants to open the game. He now obtains a tripled, but nevertheless extra pawn. He also gains the possibility of developing his bishop at d3 without having to fear the blockading advance ...c4." – Smyslov in *125 Selected Games*.



W

There are a few other side-effects of accepting the tripled c-pawns. The d4-square is cleared and the fourth rank is opened for use by White's heavy pieces. Further, Golombek points out that the pawn at c5 serves to blunt Black's play on the c-file.

While this type of idea had been played before, e.g., by Panov in the 1930s, there can be little doubt that the present game did a great deal to popularize it in a variety of French Winawers.

10 ... ♘ge7
11 ♙d3 fxe5

Smyslov considers this exchange too simplistic. In *My Best Games of Chess 1935-1957*, he considers 11...♘g6 better, but is of the view that 12 exf6 favours White. In *125 Selected Games*, he mentions 11...♙d7 12 ♖b1 0-0-0, but terms it 'not altogether sound'.

Further citations of Smyslov will use 'Smyslov 1' to indicate that the

primary source is *My Best Games of Chess 1935-1957*, while 'Smyslov 2' will be used for material from the later *125 Selected Games*.

12 ♘xe5 ♘xe5
13 ♖xe5 0-0
14 0-0 ♘c6
15 ♖g3 e5
16 ♙e3

Golombek points out that 16 ♙b5 e4 17 ♙xc6 bxc6 18 ♙e3 favours White, but is drawish due to the opposite-coloured bishops.

Botvinnik has managed to occupy the centre with his pawns, but while they look pretty, they can't really be used for active operations. Indeed, they may even become a target, as Smyslov later demonstrates.

16 ... ♙f5

Smyslov considers the immediate 16...♙e6 better.

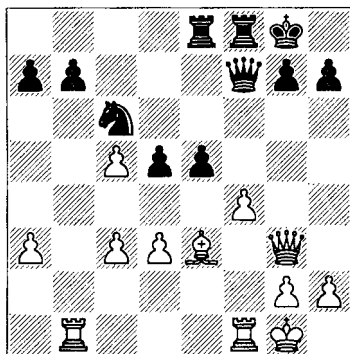
17 ♖ab1! ♙xd3

This eliminates a bishop but goes a long way to making the pawn at c5 into a healthy extra pawn. However, the threat was 18 ♙xf5 and Botvinnik apparently didn't care for Tolush's suggestion of 17...♖ab8 (cited in Golombek).

18 cxd3 ♖ae8

Black completes his development, but Smyslov takes this approach apart with ease. Golombek suggests 18...d4 19 cxd4 exd4 20 ♙d2 ♖ad8 as superior.

19 f4! (D)
19 ... ♖c7



B

Now simplification favourable to White occurs. Smyslov considers the alternative 19...e4 better, when his annotations offer two different continuations:

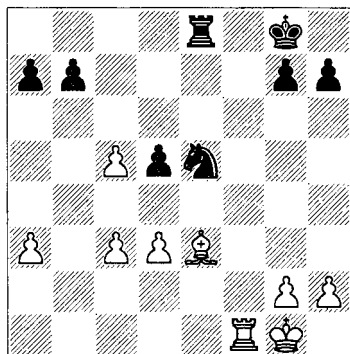
a) 20 d4 ♖a5 21 f5 ♜c4 22 ♙f4 favours White but 'Black is not without counterplay' – Smyslov 1.

b) 20 dxe4 ♜xe4 21 f5 ♜fe8 22 ♙g5 ♜e5 23 h3, and a subsequent f5-f6 will give White a strong attack – Smyslov 2.

c) Golombek offers a third idea in 20 f5 exd3 21 f6!, intending 22 fxg7 or 22 ♙h6.

20	fxe5	♜xf1+
21	♜xf1	♜xe5
22	♜xe5	♜xe5 (D)

Smyslov has whittled down the black centre and taken play into a pawn-up ending. While some care is still required before White converts the extra pawn, no further comment is necessary: 23 ♜d1 ♙f7 24 h3 ♜c6 25 ♙f4 ♜e7 26 ♙d6 ♜d7 27 ♜f1+ ♙e6 28 ♜e1+



W

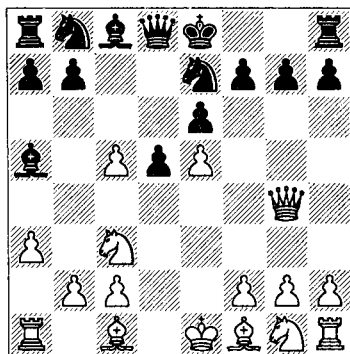
♙f7 29 ♙f2 b6 30 ♜b1 ♙e6 31 ♜b5 d4 32 c4 bxc5 33 ♙h2 ♜f7+ 34 ♙e2 ♜e7 35 ♜xc5 ♙d7+ 36 ♙d2 ♜e6 37 ♜g5 g6 38 ♜d5+ ♙c8 39 ♙g1 ♜f6 40 ♙xd4 ♜xd4 41 ♜xd4 ♜f2+ 42 ♙c3 1-0

One player who noticed Smyslov's idea was Spassky. The next game, while not a weighty struggle, demonstrates some of the king-side fury that White can develop by means of the surprising exchange dxc5.

Spassky – Nagaizev
Leningrad 1967

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♜c3 ♙b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♙a5 6 ♜g4 ♜e7 7 dxc5!? (D)

Of course, White's c-pawns were not even doubled yet, but the text is an open invitation to triple them. Instead, 7 ♜xg7 or 7 b4 take play into a different type of complexity.



B

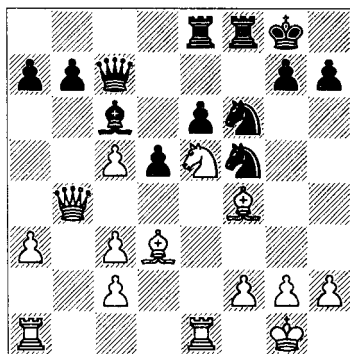
- | | |
|---------|-------|
| 7 ... | ♙xc3+ |
| 8 bxc3 | 0-0 |
| 9 ♙d3 | ♘d7 |
| 10 ♘f3 | f5 |
| 11 exf6 | ♙xf6 |
| 12 ♖h4 | ♙d7 |

For the moment, White has an extra pawn. His real advantage, however, is to be found on the dark squares, where his pieces have excellent possibilities.

- | | |
|------------|------|
| 13 0-0 | ♘f5 |
| 14 ♖b4 | ♙c6 |
| 15 ♘e5 | ♖c7 |
| 16 ♖e1 | ♖ae8 |
| 17 ♙f4 (D) | |

White's play is a model of Nimzowitsch's ideas on restraint and blockade. Black is two pawns up in the centre, but Spassky's pieces occupy good central squares and it is hard for Black to counter this.

- | | |
|---------|------|
| 17 ... | ♘h5 |
| 18 ♙g5 | ♘f6 |
| 19 ♖ab1 | ♘d7 |
| 20 ♙f4 | ♙xe5 |

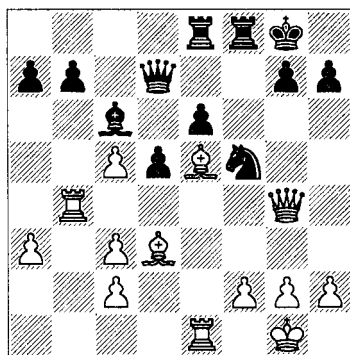


B

- | | |
|---------|-----|
| 21 ♙xe5 | ♖f7 |
| 22 ♖g4 | |

The queen returns to the kingside. Notice the way in which White's queen (and later his rook) uses the open fourth rank as a means of rapidly shifting from one side of the board to another.

- | | |
|-------------|-----|
| 22 ... | ♖d7 |
| 23 ♖b4! (D) | |



B

Here comes the rook! White now has a winning kingside attack,

as the force he accumulates overwhelms the black defences.

23 ... ♖f7
 24 ♖h5 g6
 25 ♖g4 ♗g7
 26 ♖h6 ♖b5
 27 ♖xg6!

The most destructive finishing blow, though it should be noted that 27 ♖h4 was also good enough to win.

27 ... hxc6
 28 ♖h4 ♖f8
 29 ♖d6+ ♖fe7
 30 ♖xg6 1-0

Spassky later showed his affinity for this method of treating the French Winawer in his 1978 Candidates' match with Korchnoi. Three games saw the extraordinary 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♖c3 ♖b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♖xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♗e7 7 ♗f3 ♖d7 8 dxc5!?. Although Spassky scored poorly in these games, by the third attempt he had refined play to the point of 8... ♖c7 9 ♖d3 ♖a4 10 ♖b1!!, when the white rook can later swing into action via b4, in a similar manner to what we just saw in the game vs Nagaizev.

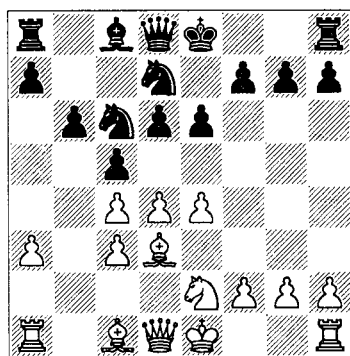
Another setting in which the player with the bishops takes on shattered pawns is in the Sämisch Variation of the Nimzo-Indian (1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♗c3 ♖b4 4 a3!? or 4 e3 and 5 a3!?). While Black usually fares well in these positions

– which is why the Sämisch isn't seen much nowadays – a talented attacker can still make the bishops sing.

Lilienthal – Smyslov

Pärnu 1947

1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♗c3 ♖b4 4 e3 c5 5 a3 ♖xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♗c6 7 ♖d3 b6 8 ♗e2 d6 9 e4 ♗d7 (D)



W

This manoeuvre prevents White from pinning the knight and may allow the black f-pawn to join in the struggle for the centre.

10 0-0 e5
 11 f4!?

Lilienthal begins immediate action on the kingside. The danger is that his position isn't developed enough for it to work, but a greater danger lurks in waiting too long to take action. The player with shattered pawns is usually better off thinking of his position as being a

gambit, i.e., time is against him and he must create his chances before his inferior pawn structure can be taken apart.

- 11 ... ♖e7
12 fxe5 dxe5
13 dxe5!?

A surprising move, as it leaves White's pawn structure a wreck. It was also possible to play 13 d5 ♖a5 14 ♖g3, angling for f5. The drawback to this approach is that Black can play 14...g6 and re-route his queen's knight to d6, where it will be a very well placed blockader.

- 13 ... ♖dxe5
14 ♖f4 ♖g4

Lilienthal's 'argument' in this position is that the knight outpost at d5 and the open f-file make up for the sorry shape of his pawn structure. With the text, Smyslov pursues simplification, which makes sense in view of his superior pawn structure. However, given that his light-square bishop is much better than White's, this whole exchanging manoeuvre is probably a mistake.

- 15 ♖e2 ♖xe2
16 ♖xe2 f6
17 ♖d5 ♖f7

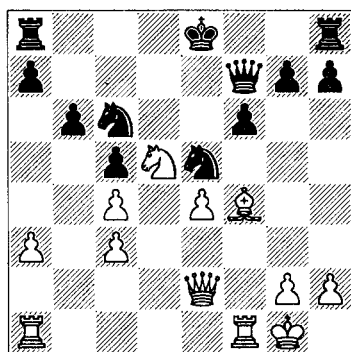
The queen serves to protect the king, but it is also exposed to tactics on the f-file. Better was 17...♖b7.

- 18 ♖f4!? (D)

Lilienthal intends a simplifying approach by which he hopes that

his pieces will display greater activity than their black counterparts, thus distracting Black from the attack on the c4-pawn.

A sharper approach for White was 18 ♖f5, with the point that 18...♖a5 is answered by 19 ♖g5!, when 19...♖axc4 20 ♖xf6+ or 19...♖exc4 20 e5! both give White an initiative.

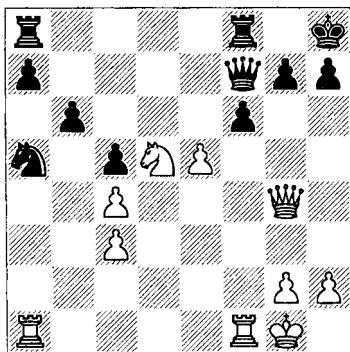


B

- 18 ... 0-0
19 ♖xe5 ♖xe5
20 a4! ♖c6
21 ♖g4 ♖h8
22 a5! ♖xa5

Lilienthal has conjured up play on both sides of the board. 22...bxa5 would keep control of e5, but the black queenside pawns would be targets after 23 ♖fb1 or 23 ♖g3, intending to play to d6 or e3. Still, this looks like a better way to play than the text.

- 23 e5 (D)
23 ... f5



B

24 ♖e2 ♜ae8

25 ♜ae1 ♜e6

Smyslov prepares to sacrifice an exchange to establish a blockade at e6. The alternative was 25...♘c6 26 e6 ♗g6 27 e7, and eventually ♘d5-c7 will win the exchange at e8.

26 ♘f4 ♜fe8

27 ♘xe6 ♗xe6

28 ♗d3 g6

29 ♜f4 ♘c6

30 ♗d5 ♘xe5

31 ♔f1!

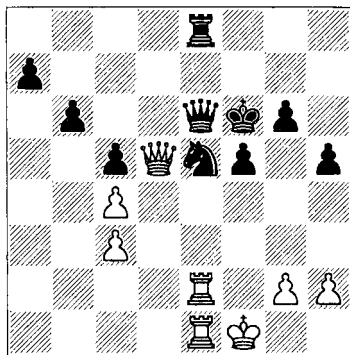
Lilienthal steps away from 31...♘f3+ and prepares to work on the pinned knight with his heavy pieces.

31 ... ♔g7

32 ♜f2 ♔f6

33 ♜fe2 h5 (D)

The alternative was the equally miserable 33...♗xd5 34 cxd5.



W

After the text, the rest requires no comment: 34 ♜xe5 ♗xe5 35 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 36 ♗d6+ ♜e6 37 ♗f8+ ♔e5 38 ♗b8+ ♔f6 39 ♗xa7 ♔g5 40 ♗d7 ♜e4 41 ♗d8+ ♔h6 42 h4 ♔g7 43 ♗c7+ ♔h6 44 ♗xb6 1-0

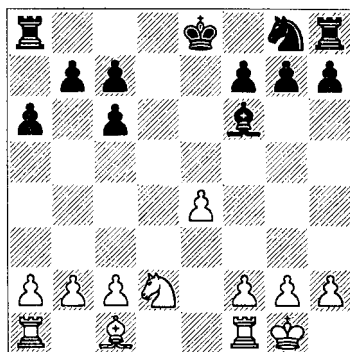
Verdict: Not all doubled pawns are subject to direct attack. Shattered pawns are isolated or doubled pawns which are at risk from direct attack. In general, the weaknesses of at least some of the squares occupied by the shattered pawns are permanent. Shattered pawns are always a liability, though inventive piece play can sometimes make up for their possession.

15 The Ruy Lopez Ending

One of the most interesting end-game battles that arises between bishop and knight is when one side has accepted a crippled pawn majority by allowing the opponent to exchange bishop for knight. This ending occurs regularly in connection with the Ruy Lopez Exchange Variation (1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙xc6 dxc6), when White eventually plays d2-d4 and gains a 4-3 kingside pawn majority. Black's queenside majority is crippled, i.e., unable to produce a passed pawn on its own if handled properly by White. Thus, Black is in the position of having to do something before it's too late. Ideally, this means using the bishops to generate sufficient counterplay in the middlegame. However, if an ending arises, White will aim for his 'dream position': a king and pawn ending where he has retained his superior pawn structure.

Normally Black has two bishops vs bishop and knight, or else bishop vs knight. Here we see a case of what can happen to Black if he is unfortunate enough to part with the bishop pair, keep same-coloured bishops on the board and fail to straighten out his pawns.

Benjamin – Brooks
USA 1991

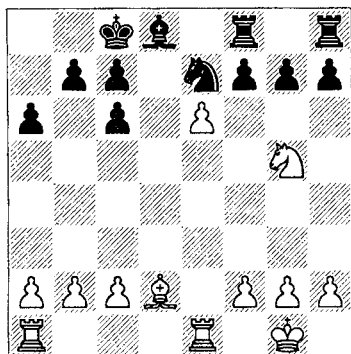


W

11	♘f3	0-0-0
12	♞e1	♞e8
13	e5	♙d8
14	♙d2	♘e7
15	♘g5	♞ef8
16	e6 (D)	
16 ...	f6	

Now White has a passed e-pawn, but Brooks was understandably reluctant to play 16...fxe6 17 ♘xe6 ♞f7 18 ♙c3, with strong pressure for White.

17	♘f7	♞hg8
18	♞ad1	♞e8
19	g4	♘g6
20	♙g2	♘f8
21	♘xd8	♙xd8



B

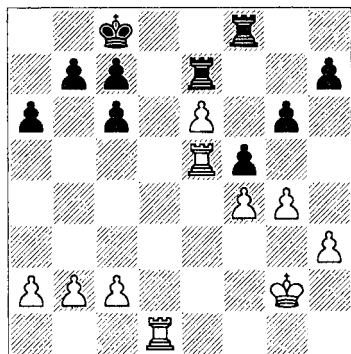
22 ♖b4+ ♔c8
23 ♖xf8 ♚gxf8

Benjamin has taken play into a double rook ending where he is effectively a pawn up. Double rook endings are notorious for the counterplay they offer the defender – after all, they’re a rook ending times two – but here Black’s rooks are passively placed and the only question is how White will break in.

24 h3 ♖e7
25 f4 f5
26 ♚e5 g6 (*D*)

White attempts to raise the blockade at f5 while Black seeks to maintain it. Following the natural 26...fxg4 27 hxg4 ♚xf4, White has 28 ♚f5!, exploiting Black’s unfortunately placed king. Then 28...♚xf5 (28...g5 29 ♚xf4 gxf4 30 ♚e1) 29 gxf5 wins for White due to his active king and Black’s exposed king-side pawns (29...g6 30 f6 ♚xe6 30 f7 ♚f6 fails to 31 ♚f1).

27 ♔g3 ♚f6



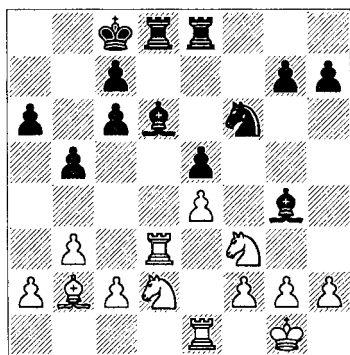
W

28 ♚d8 ♔d8
29 a4 ♚g7??

An unfortunate blunder that robs us of seeing Benjamin win the ending. After 29...♔e8 the game would continue for quite some time.

30 g5 1-0

Brynell – Geller *Berlin 1991*



W

It helps the side with the bishops if he’s tactically talented. In this

position, Black still has his bishops, but has had to take on an isolated e-pawn. This may serve as a target for White, but it also offers its advantages to Black in the form of play on the f-file. Further, White won't find it as easy to create a passed pawn on the kingside, as Black can make it difficult for him to play f2-f4.

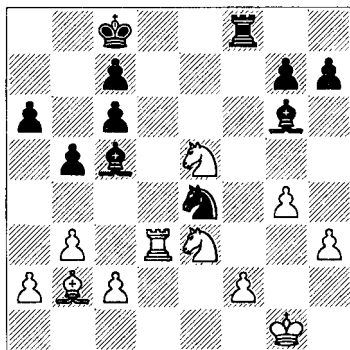
14 h3 ♖h5
15 ♘f1 ♖b4
16 ♖ed1 ♘e4
17 g4?!

More in line with White's strategy was 17 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 18 ♖xd8+ ♘xd8 19 ♘e5, when White can try to grind Black in the minor-piece ending – Mayer.

17 ... ♖g6
18 ♘e5?!

It was still best to remove all the rooks starting with 18 ♖xd8+.

18 ... ♖xd3
19 ♖xd3 ♖c5!
20 ♘e3 ♖f8! (D)



W

21 ♘xg6

Interesting tactics arise after 21 ♘d7, when Black has a choice to make:

a) 21... ♖xf2? looks natural, but White does well in the complications of 22 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 23 ♖xf2 ♖xd3 24 ♖a3! +–, winning a piece – Mayer.

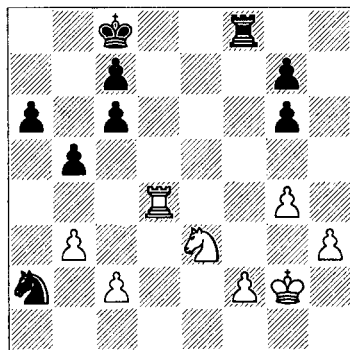
b) 21... ♖f3! hits the white pawns hard, e.g., 22 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 23 ♖c3 ♘e4 24 ♖xc6 ♘xf2!, when 25 ♖g2 is answered by 25... ♖e4! and Black has a clear advantage – Mayer.

This latter line bolsters the view that White should have removed all of the rooks earlier.

21 ... hxg6
22 ♖d4 ♖xd4
23 ♖xd4 ♘c3?!

Black goes after the wrong pawn. Instead, 23... ♘xf2, hitting the h-pawn and threatening 24... ♖f3, was stronger – Mayer.

24 ♖g2 ♘xa2 (D)



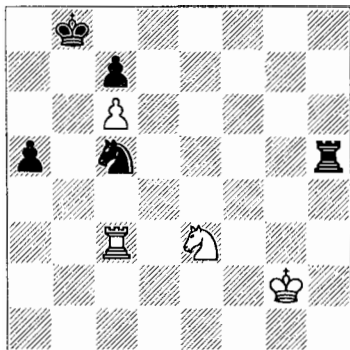
W

25 f4?

Only now is Black winning. White had a pretty drawing idea with 25 ♖e4! (threatening both 26 ♖e6 and 26 ♖e7) 25...♔d7 26 ♖d4+! =. White just checks back and forth between e4 and d4, while any black move away from the centre allows a rook invasion – Mayer.

25 ... a5

26 f5 gxf5 27 ♖xf5 ♖f7 28 h4 ♖b4 29 c4 g6 30 ♖e3 ♖d7 31 ♖e4 ♖d3 32 h5 gxh5 33 gxh5 ♖h7 34 ♖d4 ♖c5 35 cxb5 ♖xb3 36 ♖d3 ♖c5 37 ♖c3 ♖xh5 38 bxc6 ♖b8 (D)



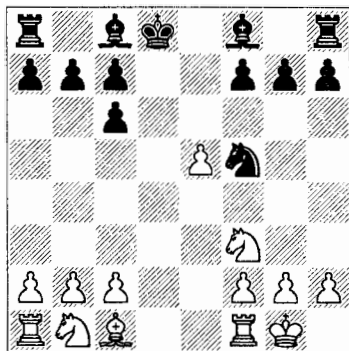
W

The ending is a win for Black, assuming that White can't run him out of pawns. The rest requires no comment: 39 ♖f3 ♖a7 40 ♖g4 ♖g5+ 41 ♖xg5 ♖e4+ 42 ♖f5 ♖xc3 43 ♖e6 a4 44 ♖d7 ♖b5 45 ♖d5 a3 46 ♖b4 ♖b6 47 ♖d5+ ♖c5 48 ♖xc7 ♖xc7 49 ♖xc7 a2 50 ♖b7 a1 ♖0-1

Kindermann – Vojska

Katerini 1992

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♖c6 3 ♖b5 ♖f6 4 0-0 ♖xe4 5 d4 ♖d6 6 ♖xc6 dxc6 7 dxe5 ♖f5 8 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 (D)



W

This intriguing position is a case where Black deliberately pursues a 'Lopez Ending'. However, there are two major differences as compared to the normal Lopez Ending. First, the white pawn is at e5 rather than e4. This means that a certain amount of flexibility is lost from his pawn structure, e.g., Black can aim to set up a light square blockade against the white kingside majority and his pieces can use the d5- and f5-squares. However, a more important factor is that Black has lost the right to castle. It's true that queens are off the board and Black almost never loses this position as a result of a quick attack on the king, but he has trouble connecting his

rooks. He may aim to exchange a pair of rooks or all of the rooks at d8, but this has the drawback that play becomes ever more simplified.

9 ♖c3 ♙e6

White could now play 10 ♖g5, when the black bishop at e6 will be exchanged off. Then all question of this ending having any interest from the standpoint of 'bishops vs pawn majority' disappears and Black is either hoping that he can achieve active play through centralization or may even just push wood in the hopes of holding a slightly inferior game.

10 h3 ♙e8

11 b3 ♙b4

12 ♖e2!

White avoids the exchange ...♙xc3, as then Black would have created opposite-coloured bishops. Further, he can now play c2-c4, when d5 will be taken away from the black pieces.

12 ... ♙d5

13 ♖d2 (D)

13 ... c5?

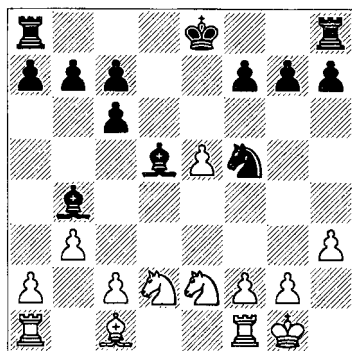
Black takes control of d4 but now his king's bishop gets pushed out of play. In *Informator 55*, Kindermann suggests 13...♙d8 14 c3 ♙c5 and 13...♙xd2 14 ♙xd2 c5 as superior continuations.

14 c3 ♙a5

15 ♙a3 ♙d8

16 ♙ad1 ♙b6

17 ♖f4 h5



B

A general restraining move directed against White's kingside majority.

18 ♙fe1

Or 18 ♖xd5!? ♙xd5 19 ♖c4 – Kindermann.

18 ... ♙c6

19 e6 f6

20 ♖c4 g5

21 ♙xd8+ ♙xd8

22 ♖d3 g4

23 hxg4 hxg4

24 ♖xc5 ♙xc5

25 ♙xc5 (D)

An opposite-coloured bishop position finally arises, but hardly on the terms that Black desired. White is a pawn up and has more active pieces, so it is difficult for Black to put up genuine resistance.

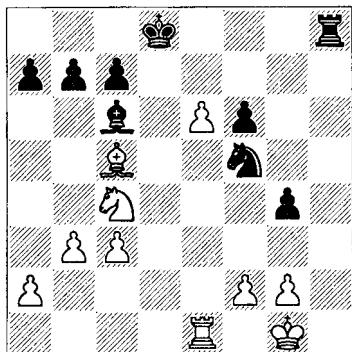
25 ... ♖h4

26 ♖e3 f5

27 ♙d1+ ♙c8

28 ♖d5 ♙xd5

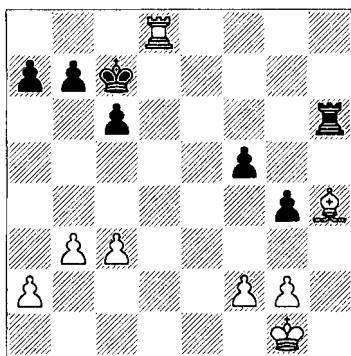
Now Black will win back the pawn, but the cost is that he takes



B

play into a bishop vs knight ending (see the chapter on 'The Grindable Ending').

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| 29 ♖xd5 | ♙e8 |
| 30 ♙e3! | ♖xe6 |
| 31 ♙g5 | c6 |
| 32 ♖d8+ | ♙c7 |
| 33 ♙xh4 | ♖h6 (D) |

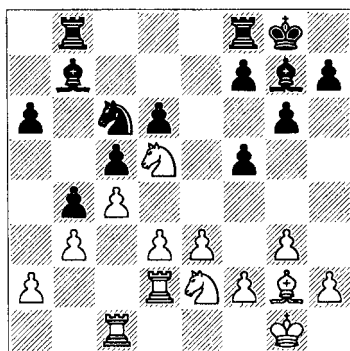


W

Surprisingly, White has no way of holding on to his extra piece, but he can go after Black's exposed kingside pawns. The rest of the

game requires no comment: 34 ♖f8 ♖xh4 35 ♖xf5 ♖h7 36 ♖g5 ♖d7 37 ♖xg4 ♖d1+ 38 ♙h2 ♖d2 39 ♖g7+ ♙b6 40 ♖f7 ♖xa2 41 g4 ♙c5 42 g5 ♙d6 43 g6 ♖a5 44 f4 1-0

Karpov – Browne

San Antonio 1972

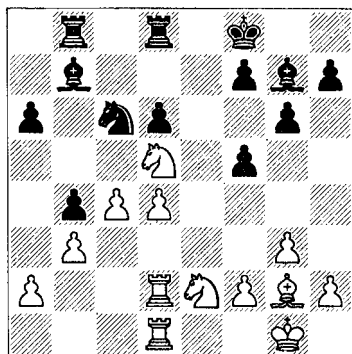
W

White is doing well in the diagrammed position, as he has the more flexible pawn structure. Karpov decides to step up the pressure with...

- | | |
|---------|------|
| 17 d4! | ♖fd8 |
| 18 ♖cd1 | |

Threatening to win the exchange with 19 dxc5 dxc5 20 ♗e7+. Browne elects to exchange at d4, but now Karpov will have a 4-3 queenside majority, while Black's kingside majority is crippled.

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| 18 ... | cxd4 |
| 19 exd4 | ♙f8 (D) |



W

20 c5!

I trust that you've heard the expression 'Passed pawns must be pushed'?

20 ... ♖a7

21 ♖e3!

Avoiding 21 ♖xb4?! ♙xg2 22 ♖xa6 ♙f3, when Black's bishops give him defensive chances. Instead, Karpov plays to exchange off Black's queen's bishop, which is providing defence against the further advance of the c-pawn.

21 ... ♙xg2

22 ♙xg2 dxc5

23 dxc5 ♙xd2

24 ♙xd2 ♙c8

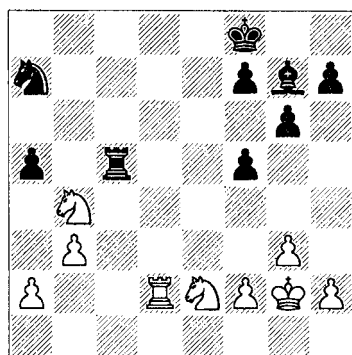
25 ♖d5 ♙xc5

Browne eliminates the passed pawn. Inferior is 25...a5 26 ♖b6 ♙c7 27 ♙d8+ ♖e7 28 ♙g8 +-, as White threatens the bishop and a fork at d5.

One problem Browne has in what follows is that his bishop really can't attack or defend anything

of importance, despite its impressive-looking diagonal. It's truly an 'over-rated bishop' (see Chapter 8).

26 ♖xb4 a5 (D)



W

27 ♖d5

Karpov maintains a large advantage on the queenside, because his knights do a better job of attacking the a-pawn than Browne's bishop and knight do of defending it.

27 ... ♙c6

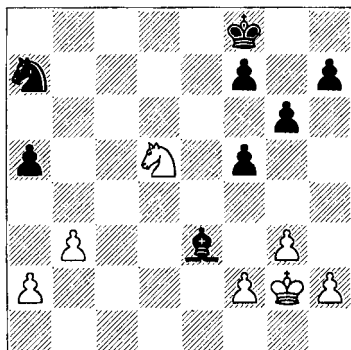
28 ♖e3 ♙c5

29 ♖f4 ♙h6

30 ♙d5 ♙xd5

31 ♖fxd5 ♙e3 (D)

Black feels compelled to eliminate a knight and hope to draw a technically lost ending. However, this proves impossible, as Karpov displays his usual precision: 32 ♖xe3 ♖e7 33 ♖f3 ♖c6 34 ♖c4 ♖e6 35 ♖e3 ♖d5 36 a3 ♖e6 37 ♖d3 ♖d5 38 f3 h6 39 ♖c3 h5 40 ♖d3 f6 41 f4 g5 42 ♖e3+ ♖e6 43



W

**h4 g4 44 g4 e7 45 c4
g6 46 g2 d6 47 b5 d5 48**

**xa5 e4 49 b4 f3 50 b5 xg2
51 b6 f8 52 b5 d7 53 a4
xb6 54 xb6 f3 55 a5 xf4
56 a6 e3 57 a7 f4 58 a8 f3 59
e8+ 1-0**

Verdict: The Ruy Lopez ending, which features bishops vs a superior pawn majority, is generally favourable for the side with the superior pawn structure. However, tough defence or inventive tactical play can sometimes save such positions, or even turn them around by ‘uncrippling’ the majority.

16 The Grindable Ending – Rook and Bishop vs Rook and Knight

The endgame of rook and bishop vs rook and knight is one that arises relatively frequently; explorations of databases suggest that it occurs in between 5% and 10% of all master games.

‘Grinding’ is the art of taking favourable positions (frequently endings, but also certain types of middlegame advantages) and winning them. These aren’t ‘winning games’ of themselves, but games that require some effort on the part of the would-be winner.

Reference works on the ending typically do not pay any special attention to rook and bishop vs rook and knight. Indeed, Fine makes the point that the principles of such endings really don’t differ from the underlying endings of rook vs rook and bishop vs knight. This may be true in terms of the principles, the general evaluations, etc., but it isn’t entirely correct in a practical sense. With a rook and minor piece on the board for each side, the aggressor has greater flexibility than in a simpler ending. The rook and pawn

ending offers the defender too much counterplay? Go into the minor piece ending. The minor piece ending is too easy a draw? Break him in the rook and pawn ending. Better yet, keep the remaining pieces on the board and grind him down!

Above all, the ‘grindable ending’ is one more option for the player trying to win and one more hurdle to clear for the player trying to draw.

Fischer is regarded as one of the greatest proponents of the grindable ending. Indeed, Leonard Barden apparently referred to this material distribution as ‘the Fischer Ending’ in one of his endgame books, though I have not seen the book in question.

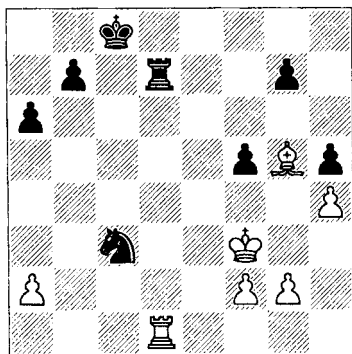
Fischer – Tal

Curaçao, Candidates’

Tournament 1962

(see diagram on the next page)

Fischer is down a pawn but he has active pieces. In particular, his king



W

is better placed than its black counterpart.

30 **Rc1** **Rc7**

In the Bulgarian Series volume *Mikhail Tal Games 1949-1962*, the editors give 30... **Rxd3** 31 **Qf4** **Qd7** 32 **Qxf5** **Qxa2** 33 **Ke1** as unclear. Such an approach has the advantage that the black rook remains active.

31 **Qf4** **Rc6**
32 **Qe5** **Qd5**

Recentralizing the knight. White does well after 32... **Qxa2?** 33 **Rxc6+ bxc6** 34 **Qf4! c5** 35 **Qxf5 c4** 36 **Qxg7 c3** 37 **g4 c2** 38 **Qb2 hxg4** 39 **h5 +- – Tal** (cited in *The Bulgarian Series*). This variation shows some of the characteristics of a bishop versus knight with pawns on both sides of the board. The knight has difficulty dealing with a passed h-pawn, while the bishop likes the fact that there are pawns on both sides of the board.

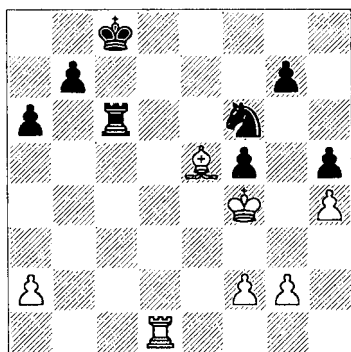
33 **Rd1!**

Playing to keep the tension, which gives White more opportunities of realizing his advantage. The Bulgarian Series assesses the minor-piece ending that arises after 33 **Rxc6+ bxc6** 34 **Qxg7 Qd7** as equal.

33 ... **Qf6?**

This allows White to gain a strong initiative on the kingside. The Bulgarian Series gives 33... **Rc5** 34 **Qxg7 Qd7** as unclear.

34 **Qf4! (D)**



B

34 ... **g6**

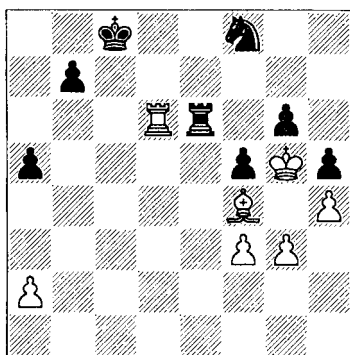
The Bulgarian Series indicates that both 34... **Rc2** 35 **Qd4!** and 34... **Rc4+** 35 **Qd4!** are good for White.

35 **f3** **Qd7**
36 **Qd6** **Rc2**
37 **g3** **Re2**

White wins after 37... **Rxa2?** 38 **Qg5! Rf2** 39 **Rd3**, intending 40 **Qxg6 +- – Bulgarian Series**. Fischer's initiative on the kingside

threatens to create menacing passed pawns. The reason why lines based on ... Kxa2 aren't dangerous is that the black queenside pawns are not advanced and would have a difficult job advancing in the face of the white rook and bishop.

- | | | |
|----|--------------|-----------------|
| 38 | Kg5 | Ke6 |
| 39 | Lf4 | Nf8 |
| 40 | Rd6 | a5 (D) |



W

- 41 Kh6!

Tal analyses 41 Kxe6 Nxe6+ 42 Kxg6 Nxf4+ to a draw.

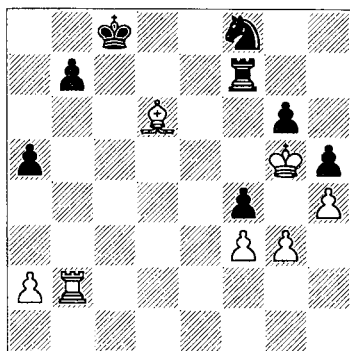
- 41 ... Ke2

Back again in the hopes of some activity. White wins after 41...b5 42 Kg7 Rxd6 43 Lxd6 Ne6+ 44 Kxg6 b4 45 $\text{Kxf5} + -$ – Bulgarian Series.

- | | | |
|----|--------------|---------------|
| 42 | Rd2 | Ke7 |
| 43 | Ld6 | Kh7+ |
| 44 | Kg5 | Rf7 |

Tal gives 44... Nd7? 45 Kxg6 Rh8 46 Kg7 Re8 47 Kf7! as good for White.

- 45 Kb2 f4 (D)

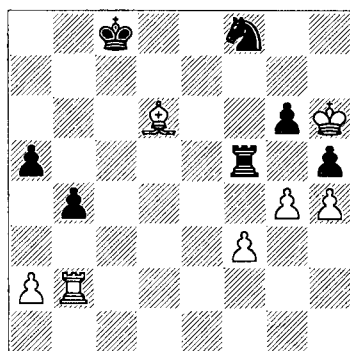


W

- 46 Lxf4

Tal also considers 46 Lxf8 and 47 g4 to be winning for White. However, one can understand Fischer's desire to keep the better minor piece for as long as possible.

- | | | |
|----|------------------|---------------|
| 46 | ... | Rf5+ |
| 47 | Kh6 | b5 |
| 48 | Ld6 | b4 |
| 49 | g4! (D) | |



B

Initiating the decisive breakthrough.

49 ... ♖xf3

50 g5 ♘e6

White also wins after the continuation 50...♔d7 51 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 52 ♖xg6 – Tal.

51 ♖xg6 ♖d3

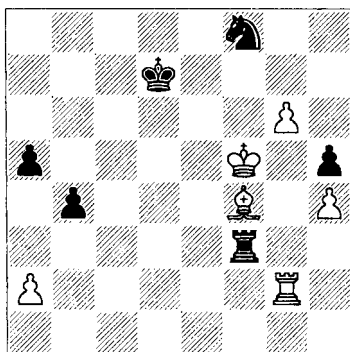
52 ♖e5 ♖e3

53 ♖f5 ♘f8

54 ♖g2 ♖f3+

55 ♖f4 ♔d7

56 g6 (D)



B

56 ... ♘e6

Or 56...♔xg6 57 ♖xg6 ♖f2 58 a3! and White wins – Bulgarian Series.

57 g7 ♖xf4+

White's new-born queen shines after Tal's 57...♔xf4 58 g8 ♖xg2+ 59 ♔e4 ♖f4+ 60 ♔e5 ♖f2 61 ♖d5+ ♔e8 62 ♖a8+ ♔f7 63 ♖a7+.

58 ♔e5 ♖f8

59 gxf8 ♖ ♔xf8

60 ♔d5 a4

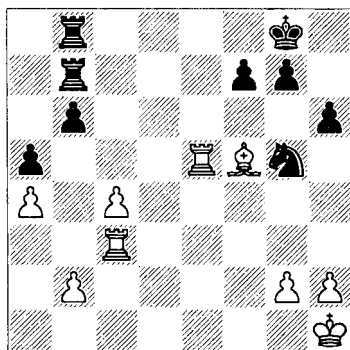
61 ♖g7+ ♔e8

62 ♔d6 b3

63 a3! 1-0

Fischer – Taimanov

Palma de Mallorca Interzonal
1970



B

Here we have an additional pair of rooks on the board. The white rooks are more active, so the additional material benefits him. Black once again faces the problem that he has a knight vs a bishop on an open board that has pawns on both sides. Notice that if the rooks were all off the board, Black would be able to play for a defence based on the dark squares, while a pure rook (or two rook) ending would allow him to play for rook activity.

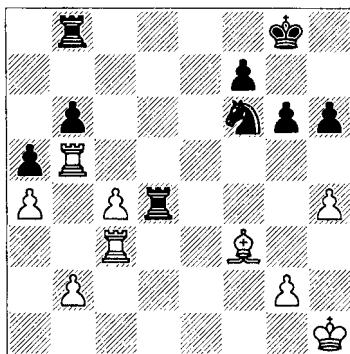
37 ... g6

38 h4 ♔h7

39 ♖g4 ♔f6

40 ♖f3 ♖d7

41 ♖b5 ♖d4 (D)

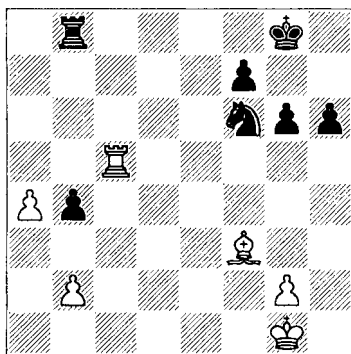


W

42 c5!

There are always tactics in an ending and Fischer was usually alert to them. He doesn't mind that his h-pawn now disappears with check, because he's engineering a breakthrough on the queenside.

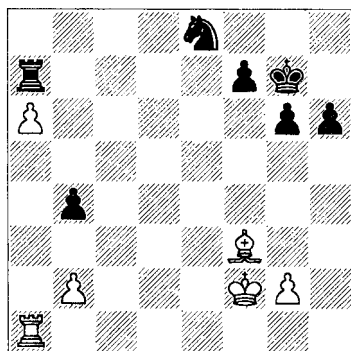
- | | |
|-------------|-------|
| 42 ... | ♖xh4+ |
| 43 ♔g1 | ♜b4 |
| 44 ♜xb4 | axb4 |
| 45 ♜c4 | bxc5 |
| 46 ♜xc5 (D) | |



B

White is doing well despite his pawn deficit, because the a-pawn will prove difficult for Black to handle.

- | | |
|--------|---------|
| 46 ... | ♔g7 |
| 47 a5 | ♜e8 |
| 48 ♜c1 | ♜e5 |
| 49 ♜a1 | ♜e7 |
| 50 ♔f2 | ♞e8 |
| 51 a6 | ♜a7 (D) |



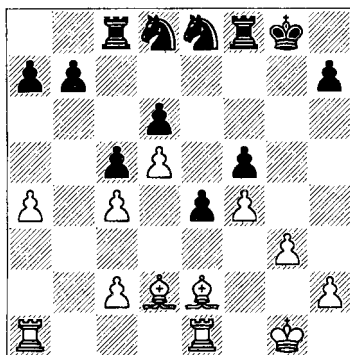
W

Now the black pieces are tied down, so all that remains is for White to activate his king.

- | | |
|---------|-----|
| 52 ♔e3 | ♞c7 |
| 53 ♞b7 | ♞e6 |
| 54 ♜a5 | ♔f6 |
| 55 ♔d3 | ♜e7 |
| 56 ♔c4 | ♜d6 |
| 57 ♜d5+ | ♜c7 |
| 58 ♔b5 | 1-0 |

The black rook is effectively locked out of play, so White has the luxury of cleaning Black out on the kingside and then breaking the passive defence on the queenside.

Petrosian – Lilienthal
USSR Ch (Moscow) 1949



W

When two bishops are coupled with a rook or rooks, the problems facing the knight(s) can be extremely difficult. In this position, Petrosian's light-squared bishop is momentarily stifled, but he can free it up and weaken the black central position.

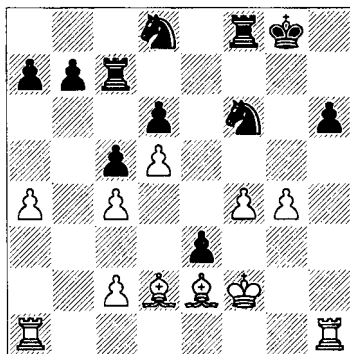
- 29 **h3!** **♘f6**
 30 **g4** **fxg4**
 31 **hxc4**

Now White has a passed f-pawn and Black has significant weaknesses in the e-pawn and h-pawn.

- 31 ... **♖c7**
 32 **♔f2** **h6**
 33 **♜h1** **e3+ (D)**

Lilienthal hopes for counterplay on the e-file, but it won't prove enough, particularly as White is already well centralized.

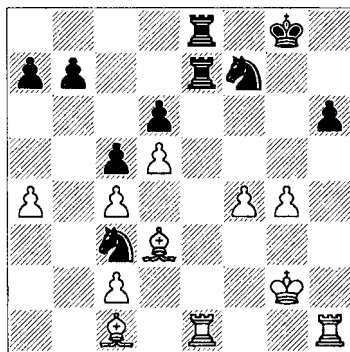
- 34 **♙xe3** **♞e4+**
 35 **♚g2** **♞f7**



W

- 36 **♙d3** **♞e7**
 37 **♜ae1** **♞fe8**
 38 **♙c1** **♞c3 (D)**

Simplification helps the side with extra material.



W

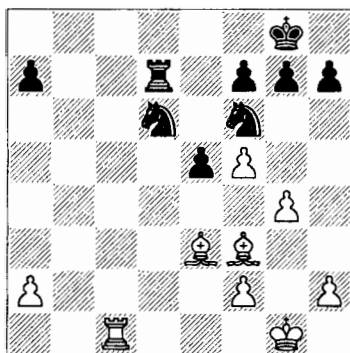
- 39 **♜xe7** **♜xe7**
 40 **a5** **b6**
 41 **axb6** **axb6**
 42 **♙d2** **♞e2**

Now the knight can be trapped.

- 43 **c3** **b5**
 44 **♚f3** **1-0**

The bishop pair allows their owner to ‘gang up’ on critical sectors of the board, frequently at long distance. Here Black has the problem that his a-pawn is exposed and White has the advantage of three long-range pieces to one.

Botvinnik – Langeweg
Hamburg 1965



W

25 ♖c5 e4

White meets 25...♗e7 with 26 ♖c6.

26 ♙e2 h6

27 h3

“In view of the opponent’s lack of useful moves, White patiently waits, so as to start active play in the most advantageous situation. The aim of both sides is to bring up their kings.” – Botvinnik in *Botvinnik’s Best Games 1947-1970*.

27 ... ♜f8

28 ♖g2 ♖f8

29 ♖g3

White’s kingside space advantage makes it easier to activate his king.

29 ... ♔e7

30 ♖a5 ♘c8

31 ♖e5+!

Preparing to highlight one of the advantages that bishops have over knights: they’re usually easier to exchange.

31 ... ♔d8

32 ♙b5 ♗e7

33 ♖xe7 ♔xe7

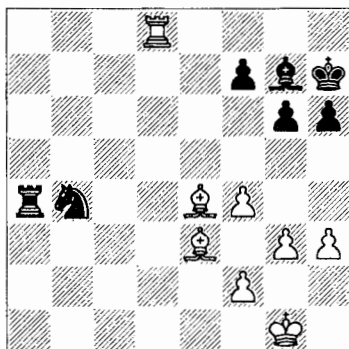
34 ♙xe8 ♔xe8

35 ♖f4 ♔d7

36 ♙c5 1-0

The knight will be captured if it ever moves; all resulting king and pawn endings are lost.

Alekhine – Réti
New York 1924



W

The bishop pair can even create dangerous attacks on the king in the ending, assuming that at least

one pair of rooks is still on the board. In this position, the absence of rooks would make the draw relatively easy to secure for Black, as all the pawns are on one side of the board. As it is, Alekhine is able to exploit his piece superiority on the kingside in a surprisingly swift manner.

37 f5! ♖a6

Black must defend his third rank, because otherwise 38 hxg6+ hxg6 39 ♖d6 will win a second pawn and establish a winning advantage. However, the black king position is still unstable and Alekhine is able to exploit the bind with some unusual tactics.

38 h4! h5

39 g4! ♖a5

Black must try to prevent the white h-pawn from reaching h5.

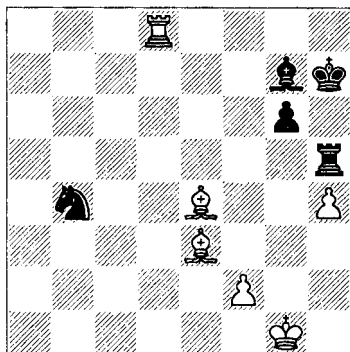
40 fxg6+ fxg6

41 gxh5 ♖xh5 (D)

42 ♕g5!

Trapping the rook and threatening to win it with 43 ♕f3.

42 ... ♖c3



W

43 ♖d7+ ♔g8

44 ♕xg6 1-0

Saving the rook with 44...♖h8 allows White to advance the h-pawn with decisive effect.

Verdict: The grindable ending is still subject to typical methods of endgame evaluation, but it generally favours the side with the bishop. The addition of another set of bishops or a pair of rooks is frequently extremely favourable for the side that has the bishop vs the knight.

17 Capablanca's Theorem –

 +  is better than  + 
in the Ending

Capablanca's contention that queen and knight are superior to queen and bishop in the ending is very insightful. The positions with which he was concerned were too complex for his contention to be anything more than intuitive and anecdotal, but he latched on to several important factors. His reasons for favouring the queen and knight are their ability to work together smoothly and create a greater number of threats than the queen and bishop. The bishop, of course, could encounter situations where defence was required on the colour opposite it, in which case it would be of no help.

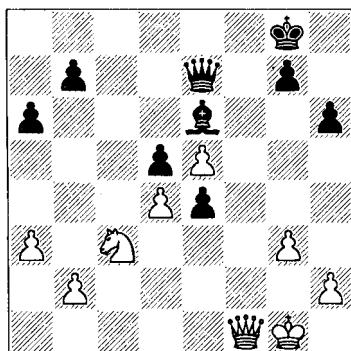
However, one can come up with counter-proposals as to why Capablanca could have been wrong. For instance, the queen can move like a bishop, so one would think that they could 'link up' together on a diagonal and cause damage to the side with the knight. The bishop is a long-range piece, so while it's true that it can't defend all the squares a knight can attack, it can

take play to a part of the board that the knight can't reach in time to defend. A more interesting question is whether queen and knight is a superior material combination than queen and bishop in a middlegame setting. In some positions it is and in some positions it isn't, but the size of the problem is such that one will probably have to wait for a supercomputer such as 'Son of Deep Blue' to address it before mere mortals know the answer. Finally, it is well established that rook and knight is inferior to rook and bishop in the ending, so it would not be all that surprising if the side with the bishop were to be favoured in a queen and knight versus queen and bishop ending.

In the long run, it would be nice if Capablanca's contention could be tested by examining a very large database of grandmaster games to see if this ending could be shown to favour definitely one side or the other. To my knowledge, a reliable database of this type does not yet exist and there are a number of

problems that will need to be addressed before it becomes feasible to construct such a database. In the meantime, we must be satisfied with our human ability to generalize and abstract great masses of information.

Najdorf – Gligorić Saltsjöbaden IZ 1948



W

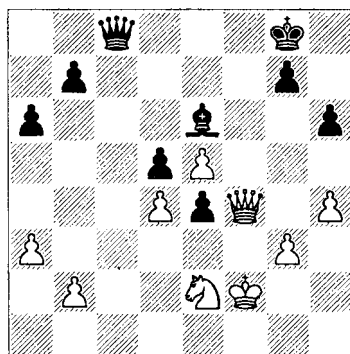
Here we have a particularly interesting situation, as there are six pawns apiece still on the board. Of course, Gligorić probably wished that there were fewer pawns, as his bishop is bad and he has weak dark squares that can be attacked by Najdorf's queen and knight. The presence of protected passed pawns complicates matters for both sides, because it means that a number of endings will contain counterplay chances. Still, one must assume that the exchange of queens would make White's job easier, since he

could use one piece to contain Black's e-pawn and the other to attack the queenside.

24 ♖a4 ♗g5
25 ♗f4 ♗h5
26 ♘c3

Gligorić has managed to repulse the first attempt to penetrate on the dark squares by threatening his own queen invasion. However, it's difficult for his bishop to participate in attacks, so it seems likely that sooner or later White will be in a position to penetrate while his queen or knight serves to shelter his own king.

26 ... ♔h7
27 h4 ♔g8
28 ♖f2 ♗e8
29 ♘e2 ♗c8 (D)



W

30 ♖e1

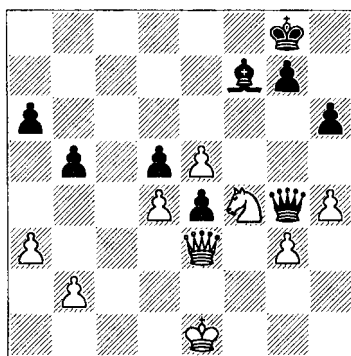
The blocked centre allows Najdorf to centralize his king. This is a big advantage for any pure minor-piece endings that might arise, but

he must be careful not to slip up and allow Black to launch an attack on the king.

30 ... ♖e8
31 ♖c1 ♗g6
32 ♖c3 ♗g4
33 ♖b3 b5

This creates further dark-square and queenside weaknesses, but something like this was inevitable unless Gligorić wished to pursue purely passive defence with his queen.

34 ♘f4 ♙f7
35 ♖e3 (D)



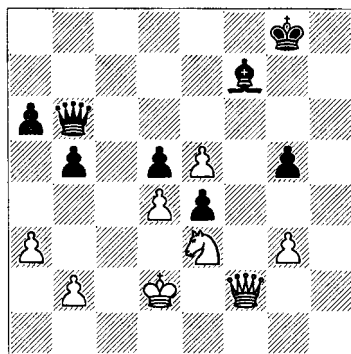
B

35 ... g5?!

This takes away f4 from White's knight but the pawn at g5 is now a target and the dark squares near the black king are also opened up.

36 hxg5 hxg5
37 ♘e2 ♖g7
38 ♘c3 ♙e6
39 ♗f2 ♖g8
40 ♖d2 ♙f7

41 ♘d1 ♖e6
42 ♘e3 ♖b6 (D)

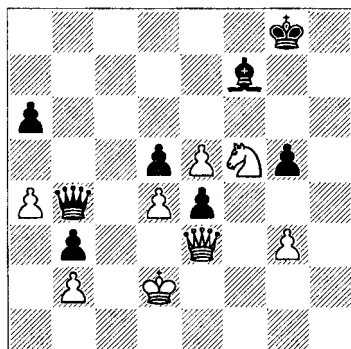


W

43 ♘f5

The knight has finally managed to break into the black position. White's queen now looks to join up with it, so Gligorić tries one last stab at counterplay against White's king.

43 ... b4
44 a4 b3
45 ♖e3 ♖b4+ (D)



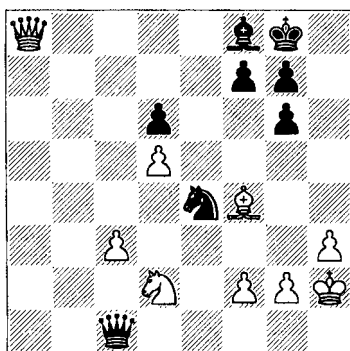
W

46 ♖e2 ♜c4+
47 ♖e1 ♜b4+
48 ♖f1

The white king has escaped danger; unfortunately for Black, his own king is not so lucky.

48 ... ♔f8
49 ♜xg5 ♔e8
50 ♝d6+ ♝d7
51 ♜g7 1-0

Manakova – A. Kuzmin
Alushta 1994



W

The combination of queen and knight is in its element in attacking situations. In this position, both kings are endangered, but Black's king will be able to escape to a colour opposite that of the white bishop, while White will discover that the dark squares around his king are difficult to defend.

30 h4 f5
31 ♜e8 ♝xd2
32 ♔xd6 ♝f1+

33 ♖g1 ♝e3+
34 ♖h2 ♝g4+

The king is driven up to the third rank. In a typical ending, White would have no objection to this, but with queens on the board, the guiding principles of the middle-game are more apt than those of the ending.

35 ♖g3 ♖h7!

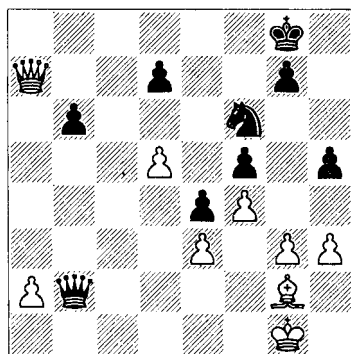
This forces White to resolve the tension of the pin.

36 ♜xf8?

This allows the black queen access to e1, but after 36 ♔xf8 ♜xc3+ 37 f3 ♝e3 Black is better – Mayer.

The rest is butchery: 36... ♜xc3+ 37 f3 ♜e1+ 38 ♖f4 ♜d2+ 39 ♖g3 ♝e3 40 ♜e7 ♜xg2+ 41 ♖f4 ♝xd5+ 0-1

Silman – Moskalenko
Pardubice 1994



W

As we know, bishops really don't like closed positions, but

there are few types of position that illustrate this as well as queen and knight versus queen and bishop endings. Here White's bishop has become a Problem Bishop, as it lacks active possibilities in light of Black's kingside space advantage. Further, the pawns at d7 and g7 serve to shut down Black's second rank, while White has no comparable shielding of his second rank. Consequently, the black queen is able to influence events on both the queenside and kingside.

27 ♔f1 ♖h7

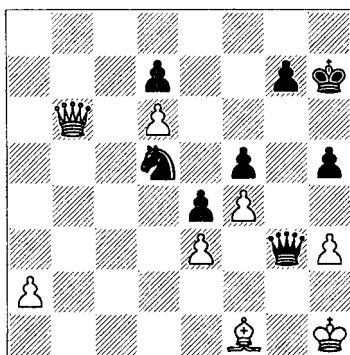
28 d6 ♗b4

Now White must worry about his d-pawn and his king position. Unfortunately, even 29 ♖f2 doesn't help, as then 29...♗d2+ 30 ♔e2 h4! 31 gxh4 ♘d5 cracks White's game.

29 ♖c7 ♗e1

30 ♖xb6 ♖xg3+

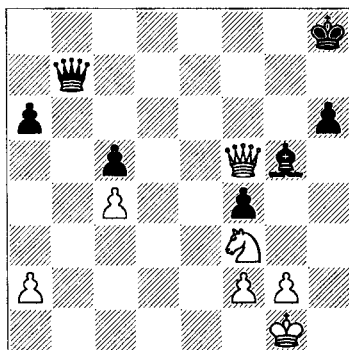
31 ♖h1 ♘d5 (D)



W

A typical method of attacking in queen and knight versus queen and bishop endings. White has one less piece that can influence events on the dark squares, so he must sit by helplessly as his pawns are snipped off and his king opened up: 32 ♖b5 ♘xe3 33 ♖e2 ♖h6 34 a4 ♖xf4 35 ♖g1 ♖g3+ 36 ♖h1 f4 37 a5 ♘xf1 38 ♖xf1 e3 39 a6 f3 40 a7 e2 41 ♖c1+ g5 0-1

Boleslavsky – Panov USSR Ch (Moscow) 1940



W

Despite the reduced material, White has a substantial advantage. Black's pawns are exposed and he's open on the light squares. Boleslavsky turns his attention to an attack on those weakened light squares.

43 ♘e5! ♖g8

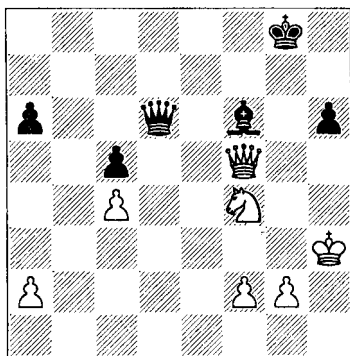
44 ♖h2 ♖e7

45 ♖h3!

Boleslavsky shifts his king off the colour of the black bishop and

ensures that a capture at f4 can never be met by a pin.

- 45 ... ♙f6
46 ♘g6 ♖d6
47 ♘xf4 (D)



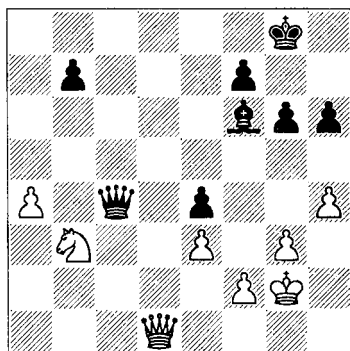
B

Now that White has an extra pawn, he can play for the exchange of queens and win the minor-piece ending with ease. The game concluded: 47... ♙d4 48 f3 a5 49 ♖e6+ ♖xe6+ 50 ♘xe6 ♙f2 51 ♙g4 ♙f7 52 ♙f5 h5 53 ♘f4 h4 54 ♘d3 1-0

Kupreichik – Gavrikov
USSR Ch (Frunze) 1981

Here the black position is more difficult than one might think, as White can play to pressure both the e-pawn and the black king position.

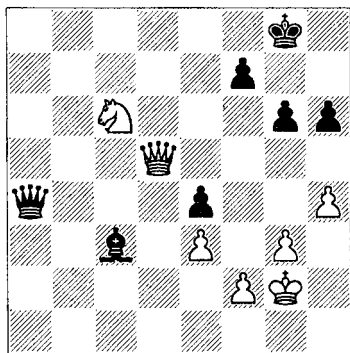
- 51 ♘a5 ♖b4
52 ♖d5 ♖xa4
53 ♘xb7



W

Angling for d6, which will make targets out of both f7 and e4. One thing that White must be careful about here is a premature exchange of knight for bishop, as Black's practical defensive chances would be high in any pure queen and pawn ending.

- 53 ... ♙e7
54 ♘a5 ♙b4
55 ♘c6 ♙c3 (D)



W

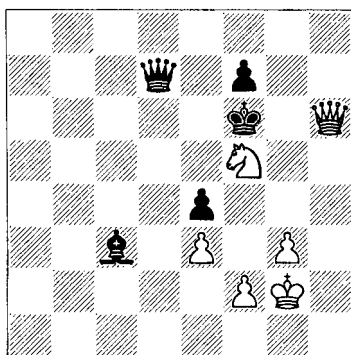
56 h5!

One suspects that Black should have found time for ...h6-h5, but where could he have played it?

56 ... gxf5

A tough decision. Now f5 is available for the knight, but otherwise weaknesses would have appeared at g6 and e6.

57 ♖e7+ ♔g7
58 ♖f5+ ♔g6
59 ♖h4+ ♔g7
60 ♔xh5 ♔d7
61 ♖f5+ ♔f6
62 ♔xh6+ (D)



B

62 ... ♔e5

Of course, the knight couldn't be taken, as then 63 ♔h3+ would have won the queen. Now the black king is exposed and the e-pawn will prove undefendable.

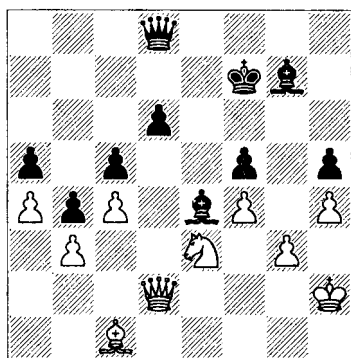
63 g4! f6
64 ♔h8 ♙a5
65 ♔b8+ ♙c7
66 ♔b2+ ♙e6
67 ♔b3+ ♔d5?

68 ♖g7+ 1-0

White will win a piece after 68...♔d6 69 ♖e8+ and 70 ♔xd5+.

However, typical methods of evaluating a position continue to apply to queen and knight versus queen and bishop endings. For instance, the side with extra material is generally always considerably better. Similarly, much better placed pieces (or a better pawn structure) typically yield their owner a good game.

Karpov – Anand
Linares 1991



W

In this position, Anand is considerably better for a variety of reasons. The most noticeable feature of the position is that he has the better pawn structure. Karpov's pawns are all fixed and the situation is particularly bleak for him on the kingside, where two black

pawns hold three white pawns. Against passive play, Anand will simply move his bishop to d4 or c3 and then load up the diagonal by playing his queen to f6. Karpov played to prevent this.

37 ♙b2 ♙xb2

38 ♚xb2 ♚f6!

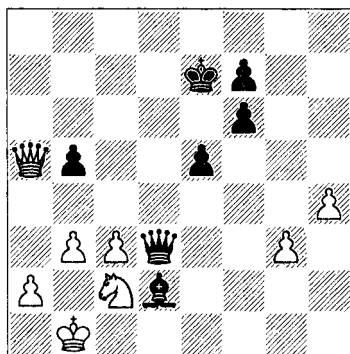
But Anand's advantage isn't so easy to dissipate. Even without the bishop pair, he is able to challenge Karpov for the long diagonal. If it should be ceded to him, he will quickly play his queen into White's position and use his bishop to team up on the fixed b-pawn. Karpov preferred to try his luck in a pure minor-piece ending, presumably on the basis of the blocked position making it difficult for Black's king to penetrate. However, Anand won easily through opening the position with ...d5 and using zugzwang to break the white defence: 39 ♚xf6+ ♙xf6 40 ♙g1 ♙b1 41 ♘f1 ♙c2 42 ♘d2 ♙e6 43 ♙f2 d5 44 cxd5+ ♙xd5 45 ♙e3 ♙d1 46 ♙d3 ♙xb3 0-1

It's also possible for the side with the bishop to do well because of having better attacking chances.

Hjartarson – Yermolinsky

Erean Olympiad 1996

White has an extra pawn, but his g-pawn is impossible to defend, so this isn't really important. What is



W

important is the fact that White's king is exposed while Black's king has a wall of pawns that he can use for shelter. Further, in endings with queens, the side with the further advanced passed pawn usually has the advantage. Black has a protected passed pawn on the fourth; White does also, but it will be isolated the moment the g-pawn is lost. Further, the black king is near White's passed pawn, while the white king is distant from the black passed pawn.

36 ♚c7+ ♙f8

37 ♙b2 ♙g7

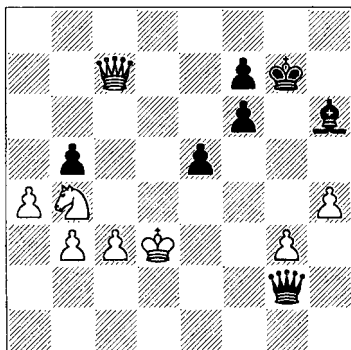
38 ♘b4 ♙f1

Yermolinsky prefers to pursue the white king before settling for capturing the g-pawn.

39 ♙c2 ♙h6

Here we see the bishop in its traditional glory. Even though it had to retreat, it continues to influence events on the other side of the board.

- 40 a4 ♚c1+
 41 ♖d3 ♚d2+
 42 ♖e4 ♚g2+
 43 ♖d3 ♚d2+
 44 ♖e4 ♚g2+
 45 ♖d3 (D)



B

- 45 ... ♚xg3+

Yermolinsky managed to capture the g-pawn with check and his initiative continues.

- 46 ♖c2 ♚f2+
 47 ♖b1 ♚e1+
 48 ♖a2 ♚e2+
 49 ♖b1 ♚d1+

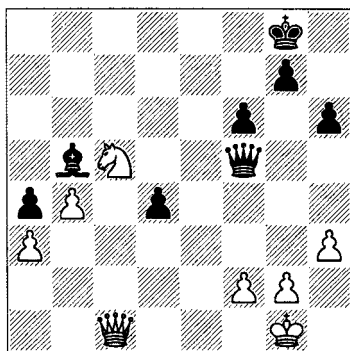
One thing about this ending that is not immediately apparent is the extent to which the white queen is out of play. It looks well-placed, but it really does nothing to menace the black king or defend its own.

- 50 ♖a2 ♙c1
 51 ♖b1 bxa4
 52 bxa4 ♙a3+

0-1

Other factors, such as superior centralization and a space advantage, can also help the side with the bishop win.

Ruban – Ehlvest
Novosibirsk 1993



W

Here White has a pretty-looking knight and a protected passed b-pawn, but Black's passed pawn is further advanced and the b-pawn isn't going anywhere anytime soon.

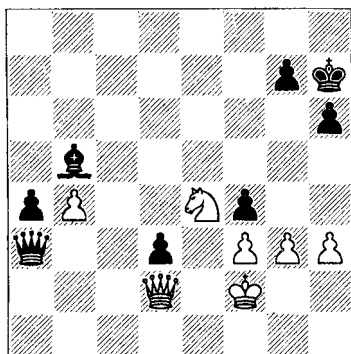
- 36 ♚d2 ♚d5
 37 f3 f5!

Ehlvest takes control of the e4-square and hints at the possibility that he might later launch a king-side pawn-storm.

- 38 ♖f2 d3
 39 ♖e1 ♚d4
 40 ♖f1 f4

This gives the e4-square back to the white knight, but it serves to fix the pawn at g2 and seizes space in the vicinity of the white king.

41 ♘e4 ♙h7
42 g3 ♚a1+
43 ♙f2 ♚xa3 (D)



W

The a-pawn will soon win a piece. The rest needs no comment:

44 ♚xf4 ♚b2+ 45 ♙e3 ♙e8 46
♙xd3 a3 47 ♘c3 a2 48 ♘xa2
♚xa2 49 ♙d4 ♚a7+ 50 ♙d5 ♚b7+
51 ♙c4 ♙c6 52 ♚f5+ g6 53 ♚e5
♙xf3 54 b5 ♙g2 55 h4 ♙f1+ 56
♙b4 h5 57 ♚c5 ♙d3 58 b6 ♙e4
59 ♚d6 ♚g7 60 ♙c4 ♚f7+ 61
♙c5 ♚f2+ 62 ♙c4 ♚c2+ 0-1

Verdict: Capablanca's intuitive insight into the advantage of queen and knight vs queen and bishop in the ending is correct. While general positional methods of evaluation are still important, the attacking force of the queen and knight can be very fierce, particularly in blocked positions or those featuring fewer pawns.

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



































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Controversy has long reigned over the relative strength of the bishop and knight. Traditional thinking has been that the bishop excels in open positions whereas the knight is superior in blocked positions. Leading players have differed in their views: Chigorin was a staunch advocate of the knights, while Botvinnik was a master of the raking bishops.

In this entertaining and instructive volume, Steve Mayer uses practical examples to illustrate positions which favour one minor piece over the other and provides the first serious analysis of the long-debated topic.

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